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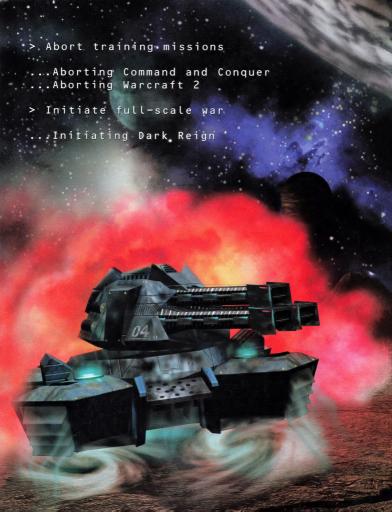
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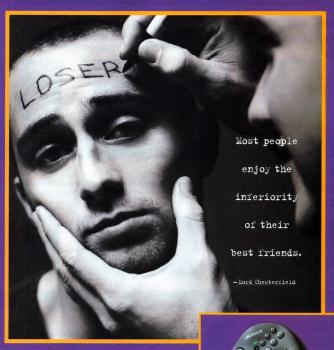


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Features

COVER STORY

42 Into the Realms of 3D By Rob Smith

"Hey, 3D Realms, you just leveled Los Angeles. Now waddaya gonna do?" Hint: They're not going to a California theme park. Preview the eerie Shadow Warrior and get an insider's look at the incredible new games coming from the Dukes of Nukem.

BEST OF 1996

55 The 4th Annual *PC Games* Editors' Choice Awards

Edited By Daniel Morris

While you were up late blasting through Ouake, we were nukin' it out with Duke. When you got joystick wrist, we got gamepad cramp. Just like you, we played lots of games in 1996. But unlike you, we got paid for it. To show we earned it, here's our annual pick for the best games of the year.

ONLINE GAMING

75 GAMING OVER THE INTERNET -

By Jason D'Aprile

Multiplayer action games playable through TEN, Mplayer, Engage, and Kali ensure there will be plenty of Red Asphalt on the Information Highway. But who has the best on-ramp? We notch a few holes in the global village and share our conclusions on how today's Internet game services stack up.

The world's most popular simulation finally gets some competition.



Player !

is the server that brings the players together before trying to bring them to their knees in a mad scramble for power.

Player 2

surveys the city looking for suggestions he can make to the group on how best to beautify their burgeoning burg.

Player

is in the midst of heated negotiations with Player 1 that could bring some much-needed revenue to her district.

Players

checks out the new stadium and power plant he shrewdly got approved at the city's last real-time town meeting.



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Connecting Gamers to Games

REVIEWS

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GAME OF THE MONTH

Toonstruck

ACTION AMOK

Bedlam

ARCADE

Area 51, Captain Quazar 101 Sonic CD, SlamScape

103 Grid Runner, Creep Night

ADVENTURE

105 Amber 108 Noir

> ONLINE Meridian 59

> > FLY AND DRIVE

Hind 116 Shattered Steel

STRATEGY 120 War Wind

Blood & Magic SPORTS

Solid Ice 126 FIFA Soccer '97

GAME SHORTS

Fradicator, Hunter Hunted Trophy Bass 2,-YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Volume 2

STRATEGY & TACTICS

133 RPGs are out of the dumps and back in the dungeon with the epic Daggerfall. Learn how to explore the underworld without going under.

137 Cheats for Shattered Steel, Time Commando, Screamer 2, and Gender Wars.

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE Stone Klott

PC GAMES EXE

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22 **LETTERS**

> GAME NEWS New online gaming sites, Bungie's roll-out, and more.

THE PLAYER 38

> Steve Klett The Player makes his New Year's resolutions.

THE OPPONENT

Blade This LAN is not your LAN-or so Blade says.

85 THE A LIST

160 FACE-OFF

Can the speed of real-time strategy overcome the savvy of turn-based strategy? Opinions differ...

TECHNOBABBLE

THE ULTIMATE GAMING PC 139 David Gerdino

Share our New Year's fantasy: the coolest, fastest, toughest PC configurations we could assemble. We dream about spending mega-bucks on the best of

the best. ALL.....ABOUT.....LATENCY

David Gerding

Latency makes a fast round of multiplayer Quake feel like a sluggish aftershock. Learn all about the Internet's dirty little performance-crippling secret and what you can do about it.

149 HARDWARE SPOTLIGHT Intergraph's Reactor and Sierra's Screamin' 3D take the stand.

150 \$ 0.5

Patrick Marshall

Honest answers to your toughest technical questions.



EDITOR'S N



STEVE KLETT

New Year, New Look

any people see the end of the year as a time for turning over a new leaf, and we at PC Games are no exception, as we've turned over several in this issue. We've listened to you, and, as a result, PC Games just keeps getting better as we strive to continue giving you more of what you want-gaming information.

We've kicked off several things with this issue, beginning with a more stylish, friendly, and-most of all-fun redesign of the book. No, we didn't move everything around on you, but we did change a few section names (Tech Shop is now Technobabble, for example). Hopefully you'll find the book even easier to navigate, read, and enjoy than ever before. Check it out and let us know what you think!

But that's just the window dressing. You'll also notice a much more aggressive coverage of multiplayer and online gaming in this issue, starting with Jason D'Aprile's feature, "Gaming on the Internet," on page 75. With TEN and Mplayer going commercial, the time is right to start taking a good hard look at the online services, as they're now making you pay to play. It's clear that 1997 is going to be a definitive year for online gaming, and we'll be right there in the thick of things to tell you where your online gaming dollar is best spent. Yes, it's a dirty job, but we're glad to do it.

We've also added an online games department to our reviews section (see page 111 for a review of 3DO's Meridian 59), and incorporated a separate score judging the multiplayer appeal of games that offer this option. We did this to more accurately rate games such as Command & Conquer, Quake, and Duke, which, for many, excel in multiplayer mode but leave much to be desired in stand-alone play. We've also separated the multiplayer score in our ratings box to show you at a glance if a game has multiplayer capabilities and just how much fun it is to play.

Of course, we will still continue to bring you tons of behind-the-scenes looks at the hottest games in development. This month, you need look no further than our cover story, which brings you the skinny on Shadow Warrior-the latest brainchild from those warped but oh-soclever minds at 3D Realms. We hopped a flight down to Garland, Texas, for an exclusive hands-on look at what appears to be yet another gameplay advance for first-person action games. Turn to senior reviews editor Rob Smith's story on page 42 and start drooling over the deathmatch possibilities.

This is just the beginning of the first-class coverage that'll take you through '97. We hope you like the changes, as we're worked hard to give you more of what you want. Keep the feedback coming!

Steve Klett

At Kent

Internet: sklett@pcgames.com AOL: steveklett



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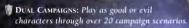
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then again so will defeat. The mission is simple, don't let the Earth drown.



.

This underwater mission is possible only with windows 95. Www.microsoft.com/games/deadlytide/

DEMO OF THE MONTH The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall

xplore a huge, fully playable world in Bethesda's role-playing classic. We're talking an entire island here, so set aside a few hours to take in the sights, interact with the characters, and undertake a few missions.

Due to last-minute techwical problems, the Scorched Planet demoadvertised on the CD card had to be dropped. We will

ondonier to but the demo an a fature CD as soon as possible.



The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall (Bethesda)

Hunter Hunted (Sierra)

Ecstatica 2 (Psygnosis)

A Fork in the Tale (AnyRiver Entertainment)

Rocket Jockey (Rocket Science)

Pinball Builder (21st Century Entertainment) 30 Ultra Pinball 2: Creen Night (Sierra)

NBA Full Court Press (Microsoft) NFL Quarterback Club '97 (Acclaim) Microsoft Soccer (Microsoft) Front Page Sports: Trophy Bass 2 (Sierra)

Admiral Sea Battles (Megamedia)

Baku Baku (Segasoft) Steel Panthers 2: Modern Battles (SSI)

TEN: including Duke Nukem 3D, Necrodome, Warcraft shareware, C&C enables Mplayer: Terminal Velocity (and enabler), Warcraft shareware, C&C enabler, Duake

AOL: 50 free hours trial software

SciTech Disk Doctor 5.3

1. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.

2. After a few seconds the disc should autoplay. If it doesn't, use Windows Explorer to find the pcgames.exe file on the CD and doubleclick to run.

Win 3.1

- 1. Start Windows. 2. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
- 3. Select Run from the Program Manager's File menu.
- 4. Type "d:\setup.exe" in the Command Line box and press Enter.





Take a gander at the list of hot demos on the Welcome screen. From this first screen, you can also sign up for 50 hours of free connect time on AOL. When you're ready to play the games, click on the arrow in the bottom-right corner.

First up will be the option to play our Demo of the Month: Daggerfall, Click on the large screen shot to get straight to the details on how to get up and running. Scroll through the other pages to uncover the buttons leading to our 20 other great games.

In Case of Emergency

The impulses of PCs mean that you may occasionally run into difficulties. Here's how to access the demos manually if, for some reason, the interface fails to run: Open My Computer, Rightclick on the PC Games CD logo and click Open. All the game directories will be displayed. Double-click on the game you want to play and locate the readme file for that game. Doubleclick to open it and read the installation instructions

Most games have a setup, exe or install exe file that configures the game for your machine. Follow the instructions to get optimum performance (e.g., rebooting in MS-DOS mode to get the best out of the DOS-based games).

If you're still having problems, consult the help files at our Web site, www.pcgames.com, or e-mail technical support questions not addressed in the files to ctou@pcgames.com.

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dates. Wriners will be determined at a drawing to be held on January 30, 1997. All pages will be awarded, Progressive be retrified by mail by February 28, 1997. To claim your prop-

4. Eliability. Sweepstates are open to readents of the United States. However, for entrants under 18 years of size, a payorf or quarters. Games Publishing, Inc., and/or Total Entertainment Network, their subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising agencies and immediate families are not eligible for prizes. No more than one prize will be

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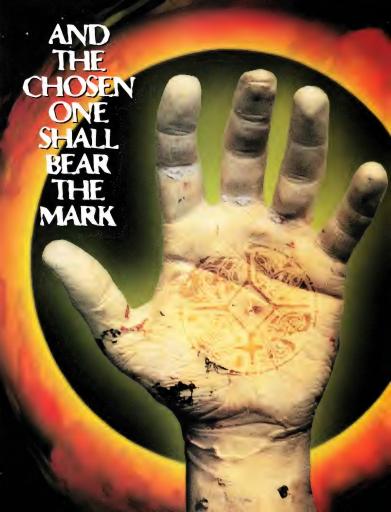
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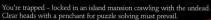
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Question of the Month: Who'd We Miss?

You've read our 1996 Editors' Choice Awards; now it's time to choose your own. Invent a new category, one we didn't do-good or bad, main or Murphy-and tell us what game would win. and why. Argue your point and be creative: the person who sends us the best response will get a free, always-cool PC Games T-shirt. (Okay, okay, and a game of our choosing.) As always, write to us at PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94402; fax us at 415-349-7482; or e-mail us at pcgamesletters@pcgames.com. Please include your full name with each letter.

Judging from the responses to November's Question of the Month (Female Protagonists?), it seems that women main characters are a welcome addition to the gaming world. Most of you thought gender was a non-issue-that gameplay, not who you're playing, was much more important. A few of you, on the other hand, were more outspoken:

Well, personally, I think having women as the main character in video games is quite stupid. Most video games are based on ideas from movies, and about 90 percent of all movies feature men as the main characters. Action movies are the biggest blockbusters for many reasons. There's blood, gore, and nudity. All three of these make up a great movie. Whether it's Stallone firing some heavy weapons or Van Damme kicking some butt, people will pay lots to see a movie like that. Now, I'm not sexist, but while women in video games is okay to a certain extent game programmers should focus on what makes more income: men!

Wilson Savas Innice, 1A

I think it's about time there are more female protagonists in games! I love computer games. I play them all the time. I love action films, too, especially ones with tough, sexy, FEMALE protagonists. There are not many (if any!) games, especially action games, targeted at women. Sure, I

played Myst, but my favorites would have to be Quake, Crusader: No Regret, and WarCraft II. I can hardly wait for Diablo

Of course, if I want to play a female character. I have to be the "rogue," even though I'd rather be the fighter. Games with females as the lead or with equal character interaction are a great way to get the men and women that play games into a mindset that women can be powerful and smart...and as deadly as any man.

Playing a female character. I relate to the game better when I see my character or get responses with feminine pronouns from NPCs, I love Warcraft II, but I'm getting a little tired of "Yes, my Lord" this and "Yes, sir" that. Not to mention Alleria telling me, "You don't touch the other elves that way." Excuse me?

As far as influencing my purchases, when it comes time to slap my money down, it doesn't matter if the lead character is male, female, or cockroach. What matters is gameplay. If it's not fun, I'm not buying.

The industry needs to get to the point of letting you choose the sex of your character as a matter of course. especially in multiplayer games. If I'm going to go kick some butt on the Internet. I want them to know it's one bad-ass FEMALE doing the kickin'!

Laura Straub Via the Internet

I Love You, Man

I just got your November CD, and I loved it! I love the fact that you put Leisure Suit Larry on your disc. I usually buy other magazines, but now that I've tried

yours, I find that I have been wasting my time. They would never have put a game like that on their disc.

Now I'm thinking of subscribing to your magazine, because that's the kind of stuff I want to see on a CD: a sense of humor and beautiful women. I would like to know if stuff like Larry is always on

your CD or if it's a once-in-a-blue-moon type of thing. If it's typical, I'm going to subscribe. Your magazine's a lot better than the others, but is it always that way? Please let me know your standards. James A. Sherman

Via the Internet

Glad you liked the demo, James, Now, about the "standards" question: We've got a simple, die-by policy for both the disc and the magazine-cover the newest, coolest games as quickly and thoroughly as we can, That's all there is to it. The Larry titles are part of one of the longest-running series in gaming: there's no way we could pass up the opportunity to show the latest one to our readers. Now, does that mean each month's disc will be full of disco lotharios and half-naked women? Not necessarily. But we'll keep going after the best game-playing experiences month after month, and we won't shy away from a great demo just because it contains a little auestionable content. Ours is not to reason why...

What Evil Lurks...

I've heard a lot of good things about the PlayStation game Resident Evil. Is it going to come out for the PC? If so, when?

Adam Knebel

Via the Internet

A lot of readers have been asking us the same question. Adam, so we went straight to the source. According to Capcom, the company's considered porting the game to the PC, but at the moment, has no plans to do so. Damn shame, if you ask us. —Ed

Feel the Power

I loved Willem Knibbe's "Empowered" story (Nov. 1996, page 58). I don't think I've ever read an article about upgrades that had me laughing uncontrollably. Upgrading a computer is not nearly as daunting as people think. I can remember a few years ago when I wanted to upgrade from my 80286. I asked the current "computer specialist" at my workplace for advice on how to do it. He didn't recommend the job and said that he'd never heard of anyone trying to do it. I could see the fear in his eyes, I went for it.

Tracy L. Eckels Via the Internet "WHAT WE SAW

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EDITORIAL TYPES"- PC GAMES*

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What we saw stunned even us jaded

- PC Games

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". Timelapse's carefully crafted story line makes it a game worth completing." Namweek



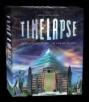
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Staying Right At Home

With the online gaming world now a serious reality, more game companies are starting to keep control of their properties under their own roofs. The immense popularity of the Internet, and the relative case with which companies can engineer online aspects for those games not dependent on split-second performance, is leading some firms to handle play through their own Web sites.

Take Sierra On-Line, which has been this route before. The Sierra Network was the first company-specific online gaming service years ago, and even after



its sale and transformation into the present-day ImagiNation Network, Sierra maintained a close relationship with INN; its CyberPark site at www.inn games.com will feature several Sierra games for online play.

Yet, Sierra has also developed its own Web-based play area, the Sierra Internet Gaming Service (SIGS), for people who want to play Power Chess, the Hoyle card-game series, or Trophy Bass 2. A simple log on at www.siera.com and an opponent-choice function that's built into the games can have you playing a lovely 3D game of chess on a customizable board with a friend or stranger in a fairly short time.

Sierra's certainly not the only company to create its own gaming Web site. Microsoft already has The Gaming Zone up and running (see "Gaming on the Internet," page 579, Blizzard is joining the fray with battel.net, and id Software's Quakeworld is due to go active soon. In addition, Activision is developing NetStorm for its own server, a system that could support the multiplayer factes of its other forthcoming utiles.

The advantages are obvious for all sides. On a Web where mindshare is paramount, the companies get to beam their name and messages at you on a continual basis. Plus, the play sites help them develop a market for a game like Power Chess that might not be too high-profile otherwise. "We think that for agame like Power Chess, online play can help it stand above other products of that type," says Scort Jynch, general manager of Sierra Northwest. Meanwhile, games who'd rather take on slower games avoid the costs associated with the dedicated gaming services. And the future promises innovations like distributed servers and non-TCP-based protocols that may ease the move to-ward fast action games over the Net. Sounds good to so. —Donald St. John

Return of Sega Arcade

Witch gamers will soon have some new SegaSoft titles to twitch over.

Virtua Squad (it's actually the arcade hit Virtua Cop, with its name changed due to va

Virtua Cop, with its name changed due to various legal wranglings) offers true-3D polygonal mayhem as you shoot your way through three crime-

infested environments. As usual, plugging hostages is a bad thing; but feel free to nail just about everything else on the screen.

Meanwhile, two new driving titles aim to put SegaSoft into high gear. Sega Rally Championship, a Windows 95-native title, is big on

power turns, skids and slides, and getting air on jumps. Track conditions play a major factor: mud and dirt, for example, can make the road even more treacherous than usual. You can race in any of six different cars, each with its own

Sega Rally Championship gives you a 3D arcade track-busting attributes, viewing the impressive 3D scenery from either a cockpit or chase perspective. For speedsters who prefer the traditional oval to the open road, the PC release of Duytona Reacing may be work a look. Incredible 3D graphics make it an eyeful, but a word of warning is in order. You'll need serious muscle metal to meet the demanding hardware requirements for running it on most systems. When we previewed it at the Segs-foit offices, Segals own demo machines couldn't handle it at is high-detail serious.

Returning to Sega's areade roots, gamers searching for a nostalpic glow may be intrigued by Sonic and Knuckless, a giant compilation of Sonic the Hodgehog's adventures. Play in a one-player or two-player split-screen mode, running Sonic or Knuckles through their paces in a truly wast playground. Ten minutes into the game, you'll forget you're at a PC and start reaching for the reset button on your Sega Genesis. Old hedge-hogs never die—they just get ported. (Sega; 800-733-7288; www.sega.com)

-Daniel Morris

GAMEWIRE

The aftermath of Quake continues. Jay Wilbur, the self-proclaimed and oft-quoted "biz quy" at phenomenally successful id Software, is the latest worthy to leave the company-in his case, to pursue full-time fatherhood for a while. Wilbur's departure follows by a few months that of John Romero, the conceptual mind behind Doom and Quake, What does that mean for Quake-meisters? Watch this space..

Goin' Back to Kilrathi

For those already nostalgic for the early years of the Wing Commander series, Origin is releasing Wing Commander: The Kilrathi Saga, a collection of the first three WC titles in a Win 95-native format. (Origin Systems: 800-245-4525; www. ea.com/origin/english/index.html; under \$40)

Hunter Back on Patrol

SSI is set to issue an expansion disc for its WWII submarine sim Silent Hunter. The Patrol Disc features two new patrol zones, which allow you to prosecute the naval war against Japan in Malaysia and the Sulu Sea (between the Philippine Islands and Borneo). In addition, you get 15 new ready-made scenarios modeled from historical engagements. (Strategic Simulations Inc.; 800-601-7529; www.ssionline.com)

MoreCraft II

Tore through not only Warcraft II but the Beyond the Dark Portal expansion disc as well? Never fear. 734 Maps for Warcraft II, from newcomer Cybertooth Technology, offers exactly-wild quess here-734 new maps for map-starved Warcrafters,

The Stuff of **Myth and War**

wn 'em or loathe 'em, you have to admit, Bungie games are always a little different. Just look at their history: In 1993's Pathways Into Darkness, the then-Mac-only developer's first major title introduced the firstperson shooter to a computer platform pining for this kind of action. Then came Marathon, one of the firstand still one of the only-Doom clones to work a complex, compelling story into the game. This year, as the company went multiplatform, PC users got Abuse, a unique, run-and-shoot sidescroller, and a port of Marathon 2. So what's next?

For fighting fans, there's Weekend Warrior, a brawl unlike anything you've ever seen. Picture Xenophage, Toshinden, and TV's

Married With Children mashed together and poured into the "futuristic game show" mold. Huge, 3D versions of everyday people-the Mailman, the Butcher, the Sports Fan, the Bag Ladyhave at it in a series of bizarre, multi-elevated arenas. No blood or brain matter here: you're fighting for prizes, not pride. Solve puzzles, escape traps, and pummel your opnonents while a wisecracking host

comments on the action.

Real-world physics, shifting camera angles, and graphics designed to take advantage of 3D acceleration hardware should add to the mayhem. So should the game's multiplayer options, which let you network with up to five other people. You'll also be able to scan people's faces onto the fighters' bodies using a special FaceMapping option. Will it be a Weekend Winner? Find out in January.

Then stick around, for the stuff of Mvth. That's the working name for a game promising to "explode the current paradigm of real-time strategy" with some truly amazing new features. You like Z? You like Warcraft? Get ready for this. Set in a richly detailed fantasy world, Myth pits you

against "a malevolent deity made flesh" and his legions of Fallen Lords. Only one army can stop them from laving waste to the living, and you're in charge.

More important than the story, says Bungie, is the game's realism-real physics, real terrain, real weather,





the battlefield.

real lighting, Rocks and heads will roll downhill; blood will stain the landscape. And an adjustable camera will let you see every bit of this fully 3D world, so you can revel in the gore.

Bungie also claims the game will have better AI, networking, and customization than previous real-time strategy games. Cross-platform networking will enable multiple players to engage in battles of attrition or in alternate scenarios like Capture-the-Flag and King of the Hill using maps designed specifically for network play. Meanwhile, a user-programmable scripting language will let you reprogram monsters, change game variables, and even change the rules of netgames.

That's some big boasting. Will Myth live up to its moniker? If it does, it's sure to become a strategy legend. (Bungie Software; 800-295-0060; www.bungie.com)

-Corey Cohen

Studio 3DO Goes PC

aving just acquired New World Computing. Studio 3DO is moving fast on developing a new line of original PC titles.

First out the door is Nitro Racers, a fast-paced miniature-car racing game in the style of the arcade classic Super Sprint. Battle for position against eight computer opponents or connect up to eight players over a LAN to compete on Nitro Racers' 30 circuits. Simple and userfriendly, Nitro Racers will come complete with a track editor. The race begins in January.

Next, there's Army Men, a real-time strategy game with vet another spin on the genre. Green toy soldiers are released from a toy box and placed in photo-realistic battlegrounds against four computerized generals on the tan toy-soldier side. Six command vehicles and six unit types can be maneuvered in two-player mode, using either a



modem link or split-screen mode. The war begins in April. Galactic Conquest: Portal of Succession will join a slew of space strategy/combat sims due next summer. As one of five races, each with its own distinct style, the fate of the universe is in your hands.

Finally, Meridian 59 was released as the first 3D graphics, multiuser dungeon (MUD). See our review on page 111.

including hundreds designed specifically for multiplayer battle.

Exclusively Engage

Continuing with its strategy of adding world exclusives to its roster of online games. Engage Games Online has nabbed Celeris' Virtual Pool, It joins a stable that includes exclusives on Warcraft II. Total Control Football, Descent to Undermountain, and others, (Engage Games Online: 714-752-5510: www.gamesonline.com)

Mech 2 Voodoo

3Dfx Interactive announced the impending release of Mech-Warrior 2 optimized for the Voodoo Graphics accelerator. The addition of Activision brings the total number of software developers signed on to Total Immersion, 3Dfx's developer program, to 125. (3Dfx; 888-545-5733: www.3dfx.com)

Starship Troopers

The upcoming Sony Signatures film Starship Troopers will receive its translation into a PC game courtesy of MicroProse. The Robert Heinlein sci-fi epic, to be produced by RoboCop's creators (including director Paul Verhoeven), pits Earth soldiers against malicious alien insects. The game will debut for Windows 95 before being ported to the Sony PlayStation.

Ring the Final Bell

Sandbox.net, a Web-based online gaming site, has announced a free stock market simulation called Final Bell (www.finalbell.com). Players use the actual New York Stock Exchange to place their mock orders and buy, sell, and trade real-world stock. The actual outcomes of the day's market provide your score in the game-and you play for real prizes. It looks like the perfect pastime for Wall Street junkies with a hankering to play the market (minus financial risks).

Interplay's Sandbox

get a unique viewpoint n SandWarriors, Unlike other real-time strategy games like Command & Conquer or Warcraft, SandWarriors filters the genre through a first-person 3D lens.

ction/strategy fans will

The setting is ancient Egypt, 6225 B.C., where two alien families, the benevolent



House Osiris and malicious House Set, struggle for the right to colonize the earth. The game's 30 missions involve uncovering ancient alien technologies, exposing spies, and rescuing explorers. Interplay expects to ship SandWarriors in spring 1997. (Interplay: 800-468-3775; www.interplay.com) -Daniel Morris



ire when ready, Gridley! Advanced Gravis is set to unveil a new line of peripherals for PC gamers. The company's offerings include the PC GamePad Pro, a souped-up version of the classic Gravis pad, and the Blackhawk joystick.

The GamePad Pro ditches the old PC GamePad's flat design for a dual-grip design, á la PlayStation pad. It's got 10 buttons, a built-in Y-cable for multiplayer play at a single port, and GrIP compatibility for owners of Gravis'

New Gravis Peripherals

multiplayer game system. The GamePad Pro also includes easy-to-use software for quick button programming in Win 95-a feature that could place the pad into cutthroat competition with Microsoft's SideWinder pad.

The Blackhawk joystick is for gamers who want a good stick without any hassles or heavy learning curve. The throttle is set right next to the grip on the joystick base, which is solidly weighted to keep the stick settled right where you put it. Gravis hopes the Blackhawk. priced at \$34,95, will become the budget-conscious stick of choice.

Gravis also announced that its GrIP system will be sold independently of any software bundle (it has thus far been bundled with games) in an effort to bring its price down to a less lofty \$84.95. (Advanced Gravis: 604-431-5020; www.gravis.com)

-Daniel Morris



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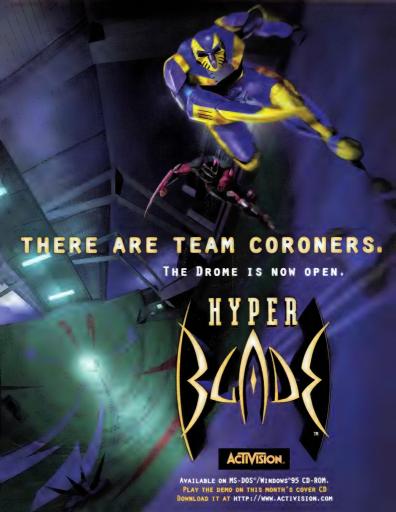






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Microsoft*



Build It, They Will Come...

wo new utilities promise the ultimate tools for game editing to creative types with lots of leisure time on their hands. The Descent Mission Builder from Interplay and the Pinball Builder from 21st Century Entertainment are perfect for the guy who has the game and wants more-only this time with himself calling the design shots.

The Descent Mission Builder, by the game's developers at Parallax, is a simple CAD-style utility that lets you point, click, drag, and drop your way through the design of your very own Descent mines. With texture previews and auto-lighting, a lot of the work is done for you, but real customization hawks have plenty of features they can experiment with, including kickers, lamps, jets, and more. (Interplay; 800-468-3775; www. interplay.com)

Pinball Builder lets you design, build, and play your own virtual pinball tables. The stellar touch is the ability to import .PCX and .BMP files; the mind boggles at the possibilities. I'm going on record: My design for a Friends table, featuring the expressly prohibited reproduction of several



NBC-copyrighted stills, will be the hit of the office. 1,000 points for lighting up Courtney Cox-yessir! (21st Century Entertainment: 716-872-1200: www.21stcent.com) -Daniel Morris

A Game Any Time of Day

omeday, we won't have to jam those shiny silver disc thingies into our computers to Uplay games, and we'll always be able to find a human opponent. A new Java-based Web site anticipates that idealized future with a set of board-style games that you can play against other visitors to the site.

PlaySite (www.playsite.com) hopes to step out from the rapidly growing world of Javabased games by making it easy to arrange a realtime person-to-person contest instead of just playing against the computer. Although chess, checkers, backgammon, and Reversi can be found in Java versions throughout the Web, you

can enjoy PlaySite versions by connecting with a human partner in one of the site's chat rooms. In addition to these launch titles, founder Seth Tapper says that original Java-based games should appear within a year.

"There are obviously a lot of people out there with great ideas that are workable in Java, and we'll always seek those people out," Tapper says. "We can give them exposure on a site that's already popular and growing more so." PlaySite also has Java-based chat rooms that have attracted hundreds of people by word of mouth,

PlaySite is currently free; eventually, there may be small charges for exclusive original con-

tent or tournament participation. You'll behind that screen! need a Java-enabled browser such as multiplayer Web ver-Netscape Navigator sions of Java-based 3.0 or Microsoft

Internet Explorer 3.0 to play on the site. (PlaySite; 212-965-9773)





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THE PLAY



Should All Ba Games Be Forgo

hhh, New Year's-the time most of us look back at the past year, ruminate fondly on the positives, and vow never to repeat the negatives. Most of us even go so far as to step up to a mic at a party, or pledge solemnly to a friend after a few too many drinks, to make one or several improvements in our lives by the time we ring in the next New Year.

Never one to shun holiday tradition. The Player thought he'd take this opportunity to share some of his own, and, of course, suggest one for the industry as well. Will any be kept? Doubtful, but who knows-maybe a few will make it. You've gotta have goals, right?

(1) Start a Fresh Air camp for gamers.

Yes, The Player has noticed a common pasty complexion shared among his fellow game addicts. You may recognize these signs in some of your friends: hollow, sunken eyes with black circles, shortness of breath, the thousand-yard stare that can only be caused by seeing one's friends get gibbed too many times. The Player's cure: A two-week trip to the great outdoors. The setting: A rustic mountain camp with no electricity or computers for a hundred-mile radius. Victims need only be signed up by a loved one, and they'll be whisked away in the middle of the night. It's tough love, but it'll help.

(2) Cut down on trash talking.

Lately, the game-playing atmosphere in the office has resembled a game of one-on-one between Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson on the big screenthe amount of barbs flying through the air during heated Duke or Ouake deathmatches is truly astounding at times, not to mention annoying and bewildering to our office neighbors. Of course, The Player never starts the juvenile banter that goes with multiplayer gaming, but he has been known to escalate it, as everyone knows his dominating play speaks volumes by itself....As you can see, this is one resolution that already doesn't have a chance.

(3) Increase gaming diversity.

Have you noticed many of your favorite flight sim, strategy, or adventure games languishing on the shelves lately, gathering dust as all the new bad-ass first-person action and real-time strategy games suck up your play time? The Player has. 'Twas a time when he'd gladly forsake Doom, Dark Forces, or what have you for some late-night strategizing in Panzer General, dungeoncrawling in Anvil of Dawn, or dogfights in Pacific Air War. It's been easy to forget about his old faves with all the glitzy 3D stuff coming out and the new levels of mayhem to be found in Duke and Ouake. The Player's going to go back and hit some of those old classics and some of their newer counterparts to broaden his fun



Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, The Player can get a little carried away in his zeal to slap the wrist of a company that ships a game that is so obviously bad. He's going to work hard at being nicer. Yeah, right-throw this one out the window, too. If anything, The Player's been too nice and will work harder at giving badly designed and slyly marketed compost the time in the spotlight it so richly deserves. [Editors' note: At this point, The Player had to be restrained and a cold bucket of water thrown in his face to stop his ranting.)

(5) Originality!

This is the one and only resolution The Player dares to hope the gaming industry will pick up. How many C&C knockoffs are popping up? How many Doom clones are still appearing, let alone Duke and forthcoming Ouake clones? How many games have we seen over the last year based on this premise: Guy wakes up from cryogenic slumber to find himself captured by aliens and needing to escape, or someone wakes up on an island or planet not knowing who they are, or where they are, or what they need to do? If you're going to make a Quake competitor, try something really crazy and give it a good, original story. If you're making a C&C-type game, think of something new-new species or races to fight with or against just don't cut it. How about a different type of gaming experience altogether-coming up with a new genre to copy?

In The Player's humble opinion, everyone making a game or coming up with a design right now can take a lesson from DreamWorks' The Neverhood. The amount of care and passion that went into creating this remarkable piece of entertainment is truly commendable, and is more of what is needed in the game industry these days. Sure, it may be a little short, or a little too easy in places for an adventure game, but it is a true breath of fresh air.

The Player hopes '97 will set a new standard for game inventiveness, as it is becoming clear the technology is there to support new directions and possibilities for gameplay.

Finally, The Player would like to extend a hearty best wishes for the New Year to all of PC Games' loval readers, Cheers, and thanks for reading, As always, The Player welcomes your thoughts, resolutions, Duke challenges, and criticisms at Sklett@bcvames.com.



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THE OPPONENT

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A Multiplayer WasteLANd

ultiplayer gaming is here to stay—so say all of us. Inclusion of null modem and serial connection support, modem options, and online gaming service signups all take up a significant portion of game development time. Many is the occasion when a software company spokesperson informs us that "the game is finished, they're just revealing the multiplayer parts."

Evidently, this is a difficult area, but one considered sufficiently important to delay game releases. And rightly so: If online and multiplayer gaming are in fact the route to the future, then those elements in these groundbreaking titles should be as perfect as the constraints of technology and deadlines allow.

Notice what's missing from that opening list of multiplayer sources? LAN network support. Many game blurb fact sheets boast that "Game X features 16-player network support." Well, who's ever taken advantage of the 16-player network support of any game other than Ouake?

Being in the privileged position of having an orfice LAN where gaming is not only accepted but actively encouraged, we writers should be in multiplayer heaven. The fact is, we're not much better off than Joe Public in the multiplayer stakes. Why's that? Because we never—and are unlikely to ever—have I meachines all networked at the same time, all working properly, all with the correct software installed and possessing between them the necessary copies of a game to run over that many machines. And we're the lucky ones.

So what's the point? Does Joe Public give a damn about network and LAN support? While getting 16 people from a crowded office together for a Quakematch may not be uncommon, how many other titles are out on the shelves supporting this network capability—but remaining idle?

That's not to suggest that LAN support should be totally dropped. For one thing, those with the capability would be furious. The point is accessibility, and the simple fact of the matter is that LANs are not accessible by most. The Opponent can't understand why so many enthusiastic dialogues have focused on the future of gaming residing in the multiplayer arena when there are so many limitations to game players actually accessing it.

Server technology á la Quake makes significant inroads into the realm of multiplayer heaven, but this has only recently emerged and apparently gave id



Software fits during the development process.

FIFA '97 offers some impressive 20-player support, but only through the curious juggling of resources and the implementation of gamepad devices and technology to fudge the fact that only 8 machines are physically connected.

Where does this leave the game buyer and player? With games stuffed with high-profile technology that's ultimately useless.

Unless.

Unless technology gives Joe Public real access to the joys of many-player multiplayer games. How? Through the online services. Dake Nukem 3D's LAN support will be of benefit to those honored groups with access to the hardware, but it's on TEN that Duke is making real progress and heightening awareness.

Does that mean more game developers should start supporting the online services if they aren't going through the pains of creating their own servers? The Opponent's opinion is a resounding yes. Spend part of the time currently going to waste on incorporating LAN technol-

ogy that will barely, if ever, be used and create either the software to allow games to run on an online gaming service or the full server deals currently in the offing from a few companies.

The bottom line is that 16-player LAN support doesn't mean diddlysquat to the vast majority of game players, but since experts are crying from the rooftops that everyone does want to get online to take full advantage of multiplayer elements, make it accessible. Right now, "accessible mans the online gaming services. If this is the future, more people need easy access to it.

While we all accept that the online gaming services still have some way to go before they manage to overcome the problems of lag (detailed in "All...About...Latency," page 145), they could succeed given the support. Accessibility is the key to successful multiplayer gaming. Game players will use the technology presented to them if they can TEN and Mplayer currently offer that accessibility, but they aren't going to be able to do it on their own. Game developers, take note: People want to play your games—give them the tools to do it.

The Opponent can be found Quakeing (when he should be working) under the moniker PCG_Blade on Mpath, or on a variety of other servers. And he'll Dukematch all comers on TEN. Send comments to blade@pcgames.com.

Into the Realms of

Bv Rob Smith



the detailed, comprehensive level design that's becoming the hallmark of 3D Realms games.

t's official: Duke Nukem 3D rocks, Invested this issue with the coveted title of PC Games Game of the Year, the attitude-oozing actionfest has been something of a sensation. Naturally, the developers at 3D Realms are ecstatic about all this excitement. As die-hard gamers themselves, led by president George Broussard, they have invested a significant amount of time and no end of late-night/early-morning scenarios into bringing some truly astounding examples of PC gameplay into existence.

So everyone's happy, right?

Prepare to meet your maker

Evidently, things weren't all wine and roses, Last October, with little warning, itchy-feet syndrome struck, whisking away level designers, producers, and programmers from some of 3D Realms' next generation of PC titles. (Perhaps it was some sort of bug floating around the darkest depths of Texas, where id Software also resides, as they both

experienced this problem.) Nevertheless, the forth-

coming line-up is suitably impressive, boasting the Plutonium Pak add-on levels for Duke (reviewed here): Shadow Warrior and Blood, both based on enhancements of Duke's Build engine; and the allnew true-3D environment of Prev. Despite denials that Pushing the

boundaries of acceptable taste and style, the guys who brought you Duke Nukem 3D are just getting warmed up. Come get some more...



Once in a vehicle, the view switches to third-person

these projects were severely hit by the upheavals, some delay was inevitable. But the ship seems to be steadying. 3D Realms has new people on board, including Paul Schuytema, former lead designer of MechWarrior 3, as producer and designer of Prev.

Soon, the games will speak for themselves, but for now, PC Games paid a visit to Texas to get the behind-the-scenes scoop on what's afoot at 3D Realms headquarters.



Time to die-this geezer's had end

Shadow Warrior

Initially previewed way back in November 1995. Shadow Warrior takes Duke's Build engine and pushes it to the limits, adding plenty of new features to the innovative level designs that are the

hallmark of Duke's quality

"We listened to what people liked and didn't like in Duke, and did it," says George Broussard. "The most important new feature is allowing rooms above rooms. This creates an even greater sense of involvement in the environments, and it's something that we definitely want to maintain from Duke "

So what's Shadow Warrior all about? 3D Realms is still figuring that out. "We let the game evolve, get the levels in place, and then in the last few weeks go through and look for where the attitude is going to fit," Broussard says. With the exact shape of the storyline still to be finalized, only this part's certain: You play a ninja of Japanese descent. Think The Karate Kid's "wax on, wax off" to get an idea of the kind

One of the main criticisms leveled at Duke (mainly from Quake devotees) is auto-aiming: it doesn't take a ton of skill to shoot someone on another platform level. That complaint is addressed in Shadow Warrior with an auto-aiming on/off option. "It was actually in Duke, originally," Broussard revealed. "For some reason it didn't end up in the final version. But it's in Shadow Warrior."

of wisecracks and accent.

Probably the most important additions to

Shadow Warrior are the vehicles. Right now, there are seven or eight possibilities, including armored carriers, tanks, forklifts, boats, hoveriets, and bulldozers. Upon meeting them, your immediate concern will be avoiding being mowed down by their rapid cannon fire. But with swift reactions, you'll jump inside the cab, take out the driver, and assume control. Now it's time to cause considerable damage of your own.

In multiplayer mode-a vital component of Shadow Warrior's level construction-getting to vehicles first may be crucial to success. But it

Shadow Warrior is flying; there's no jetpack or similar ability. "The reason for this is that we wanted to integrate more puzzle elements, making people think about how they were going to get access to a particular area rather than simply switching on the jetpack and flying there," Broussard explained.

Visually, there are some more nifty features, like water that appears translucent, enabling you to see into and out of it. Tornadoes and whirlpools that suck you into deep trouble look fantastic and add yet another potential problem to overcome.

Meanwhile, enhanced AI makes enemies climb ladders and fight when it suits them. rather than aimlessly following you to their inevitable demise.

Four mapmakers are currently tweaking the 28 levels that will ship with the full game. (As with Duke and Quake, five or six levels will be in the shareware version.) Two deathmatchspecific levels are also under construction.

2D/3D

Circling around 2D objects and seeing them shift to face you was a limit of Duke's 2.5D engine that you simply had to accept. Shadow Warrior addresses this by using true 3D voxels for all the weapons and items you pick up. Now, you'll be able to walk around for the rear view of semi-

naked women (Frankly, this wasn't in the game when we saw it: but it's coming from the people who brought you the Red Light District, so we'd be surprised if they didn't include

it somewhere.) The Build engine still isn't true 3D, but it's been stretched to extraor-

that was oh-so-familiar in Duke, It's this cartoon realism, the simply insane sense of humor, and the incredibly inventive level designs that are destined to make Shadow Warrior far more than a run-of-the-mill Duke clone.

For those fingers itching to come get some, the shareware episode is due out in January, with the full retail version following around March or April.



won't be the key. "We're going to limit ammo, or make guns overheat quickly to bring back the game balance," said Broussard, "Also, the vehicles can become damaged and will start smoking. Pick up a repair kit, though, and you can fix 'em. This will also affect cooperative play, as one person can drive while the other fires."

A notable Duke feature that's missing from

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Now they're out to get the U.S. of A. They've messed with the wrong man.

Customize 25 muscle cars with over 20 lethal weapons!

Super-realistic dynamics based on actual vehicle physics!



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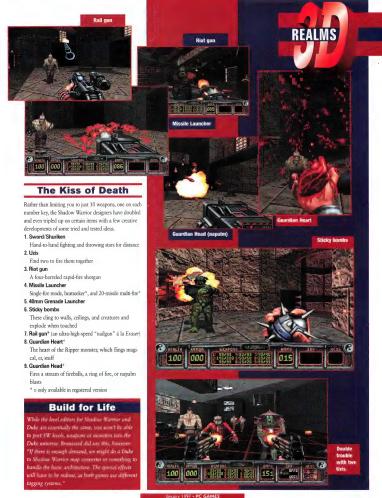
Multi-vigilante action over LAN or hood-to-hood combat via modem!



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Blood: First-Person Horror

In Blood, the Build engine is taking a slightly different turn under the wing of Monolith, a 3D Realms affiliate that's been given the freedom to tweak the technology in a slightly different way than the 3D



Realms team. Because Blood is not scheduled for

release until some time around the middle of next year, many elements have yet to be finalized. As with Shadow Warrior, much of the attitude will be added in the final weeks of development.

Right now, 3D Realms is still trying to decide exactly who your character's going to be. A lame mont guy has been shelved, but many options are circulating. Some very neat fea-

tures are already in place, though. How about a bit of head soccer? Monsters' decapitated noggins



can be booted around in a manner typically disrespectful of the dead. (There's a soccer-field user level just waiting to happen.)

While Monolith may srungele with the limitations of the Build engine in trying to add lightsource shading to weapons fire, they have certainly come up with original ways of dealing death to the numerous monsters. The list currently includes a pitchfork, dynamine, double-barreled shorgun (fire one or both barrels), a flare gun (with flares that penetrate the victim, pause, then explode), and a spray can with lighter (a makeshift flamethrower don't ryth six a florme, kids).

The reliable rocket launcher will appear in some capacity, but one of the most original weapons has to be the voodoo doll. Stabbing it causes instant death to some enemies; just be careful not to stab your own thumb and inflict unnecessary supernatural damage.

With the horror theme still being fine-tuned, a beast mode, entered after slaying a certain number of monsters in quick succession, has yet to be finalized. Slashing away with bladed claws in hand-to-hand combat should make an interesting spectacle.

Prev: 1998

What with striff increases and all, it comes as no surprise that bully tipped Quake-killer Prey is now on course for an early 1998 release. News as and when it happens



THINK ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE? THINK AGAIN!

AND AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN

Introducing DEUS, the 3D role-playing game that requires both brains and brawn.

- Your Identity: 22nd century bounty hunter
- Your Goal: save the scientific community on the planet Alcibiade from terrorists
- Your Obstacles: 40 predators; 5 lunatic terrorists; mind-bending puzzles; your own life parameters (health, energy, food)
- Your Strategy: Kill, eat. Kill, sleep, Kill, tend wounds, Kill...
- Your Weapons: anything from spears to rocket launchers
- Your Bonus: 2 play modes role playing and arcade





http://www.readysoft.com





The Barbarian table.



Balls of Steel

Even the familiar sight of a pinball table is getting the 3D Realms treatment in Balls of Steel, a collection of six fun, highly detailed, actionoriented tables. A Duke table featuring the hero doing a bit of singing should be quite



Come get some shiny balls.



amusing, and in a departure from other pinball games, there's gonna be blood! (Gee, that's a surprise.)

Several missions with a coherent story for each table will be a novel twist to the usual disconnected themes of most pinball games. Five-ball multiball and lots of voices to maintain the speed and atmosphere should set this apart from the pluneer comeetition.

A one-table shareware version is due soon, with the full version ready soon after.



January 1997 • PC GAMES

Duke Down the Line

A popular character such as Duke is not going to be kept out of the spotlight for long. His apperatures over the next two years are already in the planning phase. Duke Forever is going to be "a truly awesome, groundbreaking sidescroller featuring Duke's voice" said Broussard. It's due for release in late 1997.

To make the Christmas '97 release date, work on the next Duke 3D game will be underway before the year is out. The a-syet-unnamed project will still be based on Build, but will incorporate 3D spirits and rooms on top of rooms. The setting is also being decided, although Wagas has been mentioned as one possibility. Duke would be right at home among the glaring aron, shooting craps and taking in the, ahem, sights. Surely it's an opportunity too good to miss for the 3D Realms crew. Think of all the fun to be had doing the research!

"When we finish this short project, we'll likely use the Prey engine (or a modified version) for a true 3D, six-degrees-of-freedom Duke to start in late 1997," Broussard added. That's the scoop...

George Kicks Ass

Game recovers or in the previleged position of harmy to play games like Duke 3D.
The jeat that we throughly enjoy the manacal deathmatches, and associated hadmandling, mitting, and made talking is just one good fortune. We also like to joil our shift against others, to where George Brossest of oct credited about the channe to kick some reporter butt, it was an industrion of just how much his and lusting appeal. Duke retains.

On Hollywood Holocoust, a level well known to all. George, editor Steve Klett and I got down to action. While Steve emerged with at least a semblance of dignity in his 18 kills, my fullry 10 was an embarrassing sight against George's emphatic 50!

As I bung my bead in sharen, George beamed, Shooting editors seemed to be an opportunity be edisbed. We have three of the best Dukers in the world bere, with me being the worst of them, so you dailwit even play your best and I will kicked the life out of you! smale," Nate to remember—practice meeded.

—RS

In 2096 Having a Bomb Strapped to You is a Sport...Want to Play?



The Kickers
Kicking these

Kicking these rotates the chamber 90 degrees

The Crystal

Drop it in your reactor to increase your time.

Compete to the death against up to 3 players over the network.



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In this sultiplayer deathmatch



Your opponent is time... ecause when your clock hits zeroyou're cooked.



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Duke Nukem 3D: Plutonium Pak





throwing shrinker rays from a distance and slashing with vicious claws at close quarters. They're tough, too, taking six shotgun blasts to down. They, er, protect the Queen Alien, the all-new, bad-ass hoss

The pig cops have been given a new vehicle. The mini-tank is a fast-firing de-

vice offering great protection to the porky ones. A switch on the back initiates a self-destruct that explodes with tremendous force (run fast and far). While it's pretty cool for a while, this machine's amazing turning circle, on top of its incredible ability to do small jumps from its flat rollers, makes it a depressing, almost unbalancing enemy.

The Expander is an attachment to the Shrinker, rather than a whole new weapon. It microwaves its victims, making them swell until they explode. This one's deliciously nasty, especially in deathmatches. That's good, because the levels themselves were designed specifically for Dukematches, which will make for some classic, bloody buddy battles.

Attitude, of course, is in abundance. If there's a chance to poke fun at a movie, be it Mission: Impossible, Terminator 2, Independence Day, or a host of others, 3D Realms is not reluctant to

> go for a cheap laugh. Backed by more of Duke's characterietic unicease

commentary, unearthing new areas is a com-

plete joy.

The Expander is a microwayefiring add-on to the Shrinker.



ser-created Duke levels are available by the thousands for anyone with an inkling to download them. But the arrival of the official add-on, Plutonium Pak, proves one thing: There are amateurs, and then there are 3D Realms' professionals. A new episode-The Birth, consisting of nine new levels, a new weapon and new enemies, plus a few cosmetic changes-continues our hero's fight against

He's backbadder. bloodier, and more tasteless than ever

Plutonium Pak upgrades the full CD 1.3D version to 1.4 It adds nothing new to the original three

alien scum.

The

episodes, but has a new interface with a couple of extra options, including entering a TEN game. Sadly, where 3D Realms is always looking to

push the boundaries of good taste and attitude, it

slipped over the edge of decency with a staggeringly unnecessary opening scene. We can hear the complaints coming already. Don't say you haven't been warned.

But the good things in these new levels still outweigh the questionable ones. First off, a new monster, the Protector Drone, can be deadly,



With the subtle (and not-so-subtle) gags, it's worth clicking on every item; just be prepared for a few shocks.

A hefty install routine required a re-installation of the full Duke on all the machines we tested it on, but that's still an acceptable price to pay for the quality of these new levels. There are some great user-created levels out there, but it takes time and care to create worlds as wellrounded and complete as those in the Plutonium Pak, It's going to sell by the truckload-and rightfully so.

GAMEPLAY:

GETTING STARTED





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Hetwork and modern action



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ther 50 land, see and air unit

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th annual



By Daniel Morris

t's all we do, 24-7-365—play, play, and when it's quitting time, play some more. In fact, we see and play virtually every game released—big and small, known and obscure, hyped and hopeless. At the end of the year, we tear ourselves away from the computers, lock ourselves down in a conference room with well-padded walls, and separate the greats from the grunts to deliver the hard-bitten, truth-tellin'

If it's anywhere near this list, you know it's good. If it actually gets our highly critical approval, it's simply the best. Here you'll find all our winners, plus an explanation of what made the best stand out from the rest. Where the debate

raged almost too close to call, we opted for a runner-up; but in many categories, only one choice ascended to gaming glory.

There were some tough calls; but, dammit, that's what they pay us for.

WAR WIND

Conflict is the Great Teacher. And the lesson is in real-time!

he ancient,
alien world of
Yavaun teeters
on on the brink of anarchy,
For centuries, 4 diverse
races have tolerated a
precarious balance of power.
But a new order is in the wind.
one born of blood and fire!



This real-time strategy game lets you carry your 8 favorite units from scenario to scenario.



Advanced combat options include stealth movement and bio-mechanically enhanced units.



Play solitaire or choose multiplayer and head-to-head play via network and modem.





56-COLOR SVGA DISPLAYS: WINDOWS 95 CD-ROM



Duke Nukem 3D

(Apogee/3D Realms)

amn, those bastards at 3D Realms are gonna pay for sucking up all our time...because Duke is how we spent it. How many hours? Combining the staff, we're looking at thousands of man-hours over our office LAN alone, not including our home online play. For the benefit of our publisher, we hasten to add that these were "after-hours" hours. Ahem,

As we sat down to pick our Game of the Year, everyone knew there were two candidates: Duke and Quake. Both had vociferous proponents, and the action got ugly. Some were tempted to settle the matter in the parking lot, with the help of some nailguns and freezethrowers.

We'll say it here and say it loud: Ouake is without a doubt the gaming blast of the year. Though it might suffice to briefly explain our choice, we're going to detail some of the specifics of this close race-namely, why Duke is a better game than Quake. Our argument took days, so here's the Reader's Digest version:

While we concede Quake every technical merit, it just doesn't have that elusive quality the philosophers call a soul. Ouake has a lot of style and some serious personality, but Duke is the one we hang out with-the wit, the creativity, the interaction with the garishly colorful environment. If Quake is the big summer blockbuster movie that everybody has to see at least once, Duke is the kick-butt Bmovie that you've got on tape and watch again and again and again.

We've all got our war stories. For some of us, it's the matches spent as a Duke newbie, helpless to fight back as we were shrunk and pathetically squashed beneath the Mighty Boot of a laughing, uncaring editor who will go unnamed (but his initials are Steve Klett). For others, it's the time you rounded a corner and found yourself knee-deep in a pile of pipebombs with only enough time to groan "Damn..." before you were blown sky-high.

Or the first time you stepped to the mic and delivered a crooning song, or offered a hooker some cash for a "flash dance;" Or left a kneehigh tripwire surprise for a pursuer. Or froze a buddy and laughed in his face before kicking him to shards.

That's Duke: rough, racy, more than a little nasty, and the most enjoyable game of the year. If Ouake offers us a taste of tomorrow, Duke

"Ouake has a lot of style and some serious personality. but Duke is the one we hang out with





Nukem 3D serves up a foam-topped pint of gaming today

So pop a tab and cool your heels for a while, Duke. Damn, you're good.

RUNNER-UP:

Quake (id Software)

Needless to say, these two mixed it up not only for Year's Best honors, but for those of Best Action and Best Multiplayer Game as well.

Duke Nukem 3D

Runner-Up: Quake

Duke Nukem 3D Runner-Up: Quake



Microsoft

DYNAMICS





BREAKTHROUGH GAME

Quake (id Software)

uake is the future of gaming, no doubt about it. A true 3D environment shaped fully by polygons. brilliant light-sourcing, and haunting use of texture and shadow. Quake is currently the ultimate in immersive environments, and the standard by which first-person technology will be judged for a long time.

RHNNER-HP.

The Neverhood (DreamWorks Interactive)

The Neverhood dips back into animation's infancy to bring us a game that truly reawakens the sense of wonder we enjoyed when we began playing on our PCs. The stop-frame clay animation and vivid environments are remarkable. and, like all great fantasies, The Neverhood carries you away to its own miraculous world. This game belongs on the shelf of everyone devoted to the too-often-maligned (and mistreated) art of interactive storytelling.

BEST STRATEGY GAME. REAL-TIME

Syndicate Wars (Bullfrog/EA)

n its day, Syndicate was a trailblazing classic of the then-infant real-timestrategy genre. In our day,

Syndicate Wars updates that vision and then some. Claw your way to the top of a corporate ladder in a world where the gun is truly mightier than the pen.

RUNNER-UP:

Z

(Virgin)

The Bitman Brothers turned realtime strategy gaming inside-out with this delightful tongue-in-cheek battle between robotic armies who are as quick with an insult as they are with machine guns.

TURN-BASED





BEST STRATEGY GAME.

Civilization II (MicroProse)

nid Meier has made fascinating games on almost every subject imag-Uinable, but Civ II is his magnum opus. No game has ever had a greater tagline than "Build an empire to stand the test of time." Not much we'd rather do.

RIINNER-IIP ·

Fantasy General

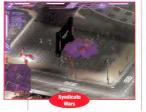
SSI's General games have leeched more hours out of hex wargamers than any creations in recent memory. The fantasy edition is the most involving incarnation vet.

BEST ADVENTURE GAMI

The Pandora Directive

(Access Software)

This one has it all; gumshoes, G-men, and alien grevs. Tex Murphy is back in his trenchcoated, athletic-shoed glory on the trail of the massive Roswell controversy. With a twisting, teasing storyline and impressive graphics, this adventure game flew higher than a cigar-shaped UFO.



RUNNER-UP:

Spycraft (Activision)

The Cold War is over, but the world is just as dangerous-which makes Spycraft as relevant as it is engrossing. Charged with thwarting a plot to throw post-Communist Russia into political chaos, you employ a fascinating array of real-world espionage tools to make the world safe for democracy. With the creative participation of former KGB head Oleg Kalugin and the late William Colby, former CIA director, Spycraft is ambitious, suspenseful, and well worth playing.

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall (Bethesda SoftWorks)



numors about the death of the RPG may have been exaggerated. Just when we were digging through our stacks looking for the nostalgic warmth of Ultima IV, Bethesda finally released its rich, enormous follow-up to Elder Scrolls: Arena. With wide-open character generation and goalsetting, Daggerfall promises hundreds of hours of fresh gameplay in a challenging environment. We're stocking plenty of torches.

You Don't Know kack, Volume 2 is the bilarious sequel to the original award-winning game. This Jack comes complete with 800: all-new questions, new question types, celebrity guest abbearances new features and more. From Berkeley Systems.



MacSoft's Terminal Velocity offers

fast 3-D texture-mapped graphics,

full 360-degree flight movement

and 7 weapons of extraordinary

destruction as you fight your way

Virtual Pool from MacPlay has all

the angles and shots of the real

game — and then some. Features

4 great pool games, full-motion-

realistic 3-D perspective and

graphics plus a musical jukebox

Conques video library, realistic physics and geometry, easy multiplayer modes

In Zork Nemesis, you're beckoned to the Forbidden Lands, a cursed world occupied only by the tortured spirits trapped there. Travel through 5 mind-bending worlds to discover the ancient secret of alchemy that will free the trapped souls from evil's grip. From Activision.

Monty

Python

HODLY

GRAIL





Is that the

The best CD-ROM game of 932 A.D.-Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail from 7th Level, Inc. It will take you on a romp through King Arthur's England, uncovering clues. solving puzzles and playing wholesome games like "Burn the Witch"

and "Spank the Virgin.



through 9 unique planets with an awesome array of air-to-air and air-to-ground combat action. Westwood Studios' Command and Conquer takes you into a gritty, high-tech world where the art of electronic intelligence and covert surveillance reigns supreme. Where guerrilla strategies and savage com-



Tank Commander by Eidos Interactive slams you into the cock pit of an M1 Abrams tank as you test your split-second-decision skills against enemy tanks in over 25 fully textured missions. Destroy T-72, Leopard and Challenger tanks with over 7 weapons



Origin Systems' Wing Commander IV is one of the latest space-combat games for the Mac. Take on the role of Colonel Blair, played by Mark Hamill in breathtaking strace battles and beart-pounding drama, as you fight your way through the most spectacular Wing Commander yet.



bat are the norm. Muster forces and

With its incredibly realistic flight models, 3-D bboto-realistic landscapes and the use of real-world physics, Flight Unlimited re-creates the most accurate sensation of aerobatic flying ever experienced on the Macintosh. For best results. play before tunch.



Get ready for the biggest adrenaline rush of the holiday season. We're talking new games for the Mac." We're also talking sweaty palms. Heart-pounding exhilaration. Stomach-inthe-throat thrills - the works. And here's the best part: with thousands of titles to choose from, you may never come down from that gaming high. Piqued your interest? Good.

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smell of chestnuts burning? Or just your neurological

receptors going into overdrive?



So now you're probably wondering how to get your twitching fingers on these games. Just visit stores like CompUSA, Staples, Micro Center and Fry's Electronics. Or flip through any Mac mail-order catalogs. Or, hop on the Net. But no matter where you go to find them, remember to look for the smilling Mac OS logo. (All great software wears this face.) If you're ready to take your adrenal glands on the ultimate ride, visit www.macsoftware.apple.com. And learn more about games for your Macintois' and how to find them. Of course, if you want to, you can always use a phone: Call 800-500-4862.



Afterlife

(LucasArts)

Time waits for no man, but it's comforting knowing that heaven has such friendly and efficient administrators. As for the poor souls that end up "headed south," things get sticky real fast, Afterlife is flat-out entertaining, something fewer and fewer games are these days. Fine fun for saints and sinners alike.

BEST SIMULATION



BEST FLIGHT SIM

AH-64D Longbow

(Electronic Arts)

That's right—this year's Top Gun trophy goes to a craft that never gets above the hard deck. Jane's Combat Simulations' AH-64D Longbow is the most involving, you-are-there experience in the air this year. Its stunning terrain, edge-of-seat missions, and teeth-gritting gameplay were second to none (a good thing, since there are no points for...well, you know).

BEST DRIVING SIM **Grand Prix II**

(MicroProse)

Jith its deft mix of graphic treats, sterling simulation, and downhome testosterone, Grand Prix II was the winner by several lengths. Plenty of gas in this tank for both obsessive feature-tweakers and arcade enthusiasts.



BEST COMBAT SIM

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

(Activision)

xpanding on its glorious MechWarrior 2 (PC Games) Game of the Year 1995)

Activision puts you in command of a merc outfit selling its services to the highest bidder. With new mechs, new environments, and a stepped-up 3D facelift, Mercen-

aries improves what was already one of gaming's most thrilling simulations

RHNNER-HP

Wing Commander IV

(Origin)

When they finally get around to writing the book on the pioneers of interactive entertainment, the Wing Commander series is going to fill a

nice, thick chapter. The fourth installment, a layish, well-executed space opera, carries the series forth in fine style.



BEST SPORTS GAME

Links LS

(Access Software)

nolfers had reason to rejoice with the release of Links LS. Its stunning photorealistic courses and astoundingly real physics are sharper than anything else we've seen. We spent more time on these digital links than we did in any virtual ballpark, gridiron, rink, or stadium this year.



Chessmaster 5000

(Mindscape)

pion's nearly unbeatable.

indscape's Chessmaster series has long been the standard by which chess games are judged, and the newest entry checkmates the competition. Featuring a comprehensive tutorial section and a complete online gaming package, this chamIf you play only one <u>real</u> RPG this year, it will have to be...



Fallout

A GURPS Postnuclear Adventure

"Fallout has everything necessary to be the best roleplaying game of all time"









Coming Soon for Win 95/DOS, and Mac



technology should continue to sear gamer eyeballs throughout 1997 as it appears on graphics cards from Creative Labs, Sierra, Intergraph, and other hardware vendors.

BEST ONLINE GAME

Warbirds (Interactive Creations)

Marbirds continues to be the model for what an online game should be enclessly entertaining. Our week would be much duller without the promise of Thursday night sorties. May the wired gaming community of tomorrow be as much fun to fly as Warbird's skies are today.

RUNNER-UP:

Multiplayer Battletech: Solaris (Kesmai)

Kesmai/Aries' MPBS is easy to learn and fun to play...and play...and play...and play. Better yet, it's a ter-fific place to "hang." From the bar where Mech Warriors swap tales of battlefield slaggings to the warzones themselves, Battletech: Solaris is not just a great game, but a great community.

REST PERIPHERAL

Gravis GrIP

(Advanced Gravis)

ave GrIP, will travel. This handy four-way gameport is a must for four-way gameport is a must for much game the same machine. Gure, this is the age of modems and on-line gaming and such, but there's nothing like scoring on a breakway goal past your buddy's upine goalie, then turning and indicting his manhood eye to eye. The GrIP is the peripheral getting the most use in our office, and we suspect that will be true for a while to come.

RUNNER-UP:

SideWinder Gamepad

(Microsoft)

While its DOS-shell compatibility is variable, the Microsoft pad is a must-have Windows 95 gaming accessory. The DOS Militia may decry Win 95 from hill to hill, but it's rapidly becoming the gaming OS of Choice. The SideWinder pad is its finest peripheral.

Falcon Mach V

the latest game in our mailbin, we head straight to the Mach V to put it through its paces. Built first and foremost with gamers in mind, the Mach V is the best gaming rig we looked at this year.

BEST COMPONENT

nce vou've seen a game turbo-

charged by the Vérité chipsetand

Vérité 3D Accelerator

(Rendition)

BIOS, it's hard to go back.

Rendition's technology is the best of the first-gen 3D acceleration bumper crop thus far, turning pixelated terrain into full-blown landscapes and simulated environments into something damn near reality. Though its competition is getting tough, the Vérité

RUNNER-UP:

GameLAN

(Apexx Technology)

Those of us who routinely subvert office productivity by using our LANs for games have all wished we could ig the thing up at home and indulge in a weekend of War and Waste.

GameLAN is a simple, relatively affordable network designed to let gamers set themselves up with a personal LAN. It's what we've used most of the year for our in-house fragfests, and its performance has been topnorch.

BREAKTHROUGH HARDWARE

SideWinder GamePad

us the facts, ma'm: it's affordable, it's user-friendly, and it's ridiculously cay to install, use, and configure for several pads for multigraming without having multiple joystick ports. It's the perfect model of what "plug and-play" was supposed to be all along, and destined to be the protoxylical peripheral of

the plug-and-play era.



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PATIENT 4-0: Treated for severe lacerations received when he was knocked off his rocket by competitor's cable while "Rocket Racing" Rhinoplasty and ear reconstruction were also necessary, as patient's face was smashed repeatedly against the ground and walls while traveling in excess of 100 mph.



PATIENT 98-B: Treated for massive head trauma suffered after ramming his rocket into an exploding ball while playing "Rocket Ball." The accident completely welded his eye sockets shut and tore 90% of the skin off his face. Needless to say, this was no ordinary "lift and tuck"



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is that f the same place isn't there the second time.

- Willie Tyler

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omputer games aren't spontaneously generated in a Toys "R" Us landfill. They were never the contents of Pandora's box. And they aren't a neo-communist plot to reduce the intelligence of American vouth to the moron level. They're the inspired and dedicated work of thousands of talented people whose main goal in life (after retiring wealthy at 38) is to bring you involving, provocative, polished, and revolutionary interactive entertainment.

To recognize these human dynamos behind the high-tech, PC Games created the Murphy Awards (named after Tex Murphy, one of the first live-video characters in a computer game). In contrast to our productoriented Editors' Choice Awards, the Murphys honor the people who continue to make computer games one of the most remarkable creative pursuits of the 20th century.

gaing has brought American office productivity to a screeching halt with each succes-release, and with the departure of some key people to pursue individual projects, this is perfect their to salute it districts for ingriting the 3D action revolution (not to men-the shareware distribution model).

We remember Commander Keen, when did was first tapping at the door, and the good bast that was Boom. Quake's technology will be the first-person standard for a time to come. We have a feeling these boys aren't done writing the industry's luture eyet, so to those staying abound at it and to those venturing to now horizons, our seel thanks and congratulations. And from network managers across America, curses out and

BEST MALE ACTOR

Nobody

BEST FEMALE ACTOR

Mobody

After a round of full-motion-video games mostly notable more for their technology than their entertainment value, the industry saw a backlash that resulted in a lightweight year for video-driven games. Is FMV dead? We don't think so. Developers just need to re-evaluate the role that conventional storytelling and acting should play in an interactive environment.

Still, a slow FMV year meant that no performers jumped off the screen to capture our imagination. On the upside, we've already seen a couple of early FMV contenders that suggest 1997 will be a much better year for digitized acting.

LIVE-ACTION FOOTAGE

Chris Janes, Adrian Carr, Aaron Conners

The Pandora Directive

As our awards' namesake, Tex, Chris Jones didn't exactly stretch his acting chops in this

THE 3RD ANNUAL MURPHY AWARDS

sequel to Under A Killing Moon. Still, the fullmotion video in The Pandora Directive—created in collaboration with director Carr and co-designer Conners—was the best of the year's otherwise so-so entries.



BEST ART

Mark Ryden

If anyone doubts that computer games lack the visual sophistication of other art forms, let them look at 9. Ryden's art direction of this sumptuous adventure spawned images of audacious creativity. Who needs photorealism when fantasy looks this good?

BEST ANIMATION

Eric Ciccons, Mike Diets, Deunlas

The Neverbood

Clay animation has rarely looked better on any screen, let alone a monitor. Designer TenNapel and animators Ciccone and Dietz (supported by art colleagues Mark and Tim Lorenzen, Brian Betheld, and Edward Schofield, along with armature designer Peter Marinello) handcrafted every frame of The Neverthood, and it's dazzling.

BEST MUSIC

Terry Taylor

The Neverhood

This finely carfice Jame moves to the playful beat of a wonderful ragime soundtrack. Like so many other trends that The Neverthood backs, its music seems decades out of place for the interactive era. So what? Taylor's ingenious retro score creates an audio environment that perfectly complements the rich fantansy of Klaymen's quest.



BEST STORY Chris Jones,

Directive

Aaron Conners The Pandora

No sooner are the trencheoat and slouch hat comfortably in place than Tex Murphy finds himself in the middle of a frightening web of intrigue. From rain-sikeded city streets to the deep abbys of an alien tomb, The Pandora Directive teases, grabs, and satisfies. It's an ode to the henefit that good writing can bring to a gan bring to



Jeen Se Jeen

Jon St. John Duke Nukem 3D

Granted, the guy didn't have to do a lot of work in providing the voice of Duke Nukem; but what he did was priceless and peerless—it'll inform the vocabulary of action gamers for years to come. Duke's riotous deadpan is the spark of life that separates Duke from the mass of 3D shooters released this year. "Cool."

BEST FRIEND Jennifer Aniston Steven Spielberg's Director Chair

No contest on this one.

AON BEFOYD? AON DOZL BEBRIFD? LE LIE ENLINE?

This good is beat it sales the best and committee the best and committee that participe

The highlary and motion effects are large rate. You can purp into this game immediately.

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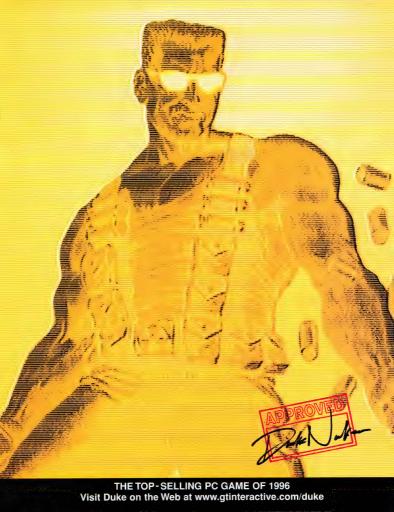


- al
- Explore 11 new levels, several based on current hit movies
- See all new enemies get their butts kicked by Duke's steeltoed boots
- Smell steaming entrails as Duke's new microwave cannon fries and explodes those alien bastards
- Hear aliens squeal as Duke aborts their entire race in one of two hilarious and controversial new cinematic scenes
- Learn more about Duke's philosophy as he cracks dozens of new one-liners (Duke Talk)
- Exciting new special effects.
- including deadly lightning and new features such as simulated multiplayer games (against up to 7 other Dukes) on a single computer
- Other Duke-approved stuff: Duke Win95 themes, 5 Duke Screen savers, 6 Duke jigsaw puzzles and Image Carousel





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Gaming Over the Internet



ell, we finally have a truly useful reason for the existence of the Internet—blowing up our friends, neighbors and total strangers all over the Net. For any hard-core gamer, that sure beats Web surfing (or crawling, really) and IRC chat.

By Jason D'Aprile

Both TEN and Mplayer—the two most high-profile Net-based gaming services—are officially moving out of the testing stage and becoming full-fledged Internet gaming services. So finally, gaming over the Net has hit the mainstream, with plenty more to come. But with the choices you have right now and other new services approaching, what's right for you?

There are a number of questions you need to answer before you decide on one source for your Internet gaming. Which service has the most games that appeal to you? As important or even more so, what type of connection do you have? For instance, I live out in the country, several hundred miles away from a major city, so my Internet choices are not exactly striking, but most games probably have several different internet service providers (ISPs) that they could use. Or maybe you have an online service like AOL or Prodigy. For the latter, you really have only one choice right now—Engage, which should be appearing on both services by the time you read this. One more question: How much do the services cost?

ISP users will have to come to grips with the ideas of latency, pings, and lag (for in-depth information on these concepts, see David Gerding's article in this month's Technobabble. If your connection to the Net is clean and solid, all the services should work quite well for you most of the time, and you stand in what might be referred to as an "ideal situation." But if your ISP is a little on the spotty-and-gritty side at times (and most are at some point), then you get to see how clever those programmers in the back room really are. How do the various Net gaming options stack up? Here's a firsthand look at TEN, Mplayer, and Engage—and Kali, a back that's many a gamer's delight.

The Total Entertainment Network (www.ten.net)

VERVIEW: Total Entertainment
Network—more familiarly, TEN—is the
first widespread, well-known commercial
Internet gaming service, notable not so
much for its high-profile marketing as for
Duke Nukem 3D. TEN's exclusive fiveyear deal with 3D Realms assures the service a top apot among hard-core action
fans and gives it an enviable ace up its
sleeve, along with some of the most impressive, big-name multiplayer games of
any of the services. TEN also has the
AD&ED Dark Suns role-playing gaming
world, with a fill one-year exclusives to it.

TEN works with current Internet providers to minimize latency, and moves servers closer to users by having three main servers in different parts of the country (the Esta and West Coast areas, with the middle ground being taken up by the Chicago server). TEN isn't quite as latency-friendly as Mplayer, however. When you log on and enter different game rooms, you'll have to comtrust with ME Randwidth, the icon used to represent all the Internet gaming concerns. Mr. Brandwidth
will tell you how good your
connection is based on a few
criteria, and if it doesn't quite
cut it, he won't let you play.
TEN offers direct-dial numbers
throughout the country, but
charges almost a dollar an
hour extra for using them
(which should put a noticeable
smile on Mr. Bandwidth) ittire
smile on Mr. Bandwidth) ittire
mile face, not no mention TENS investors!

When you do get a solid connection, however, good game quality is usually fairly easy to find.

Sure, playing Dake over TEN isn't going to match the speed and quality of an office network, but most of the time the playability is quite good. In the future, TEN will be looking to expand its front-end interface by embedding a full-fledged with the prosent in the software and, eventually, moving to make the interface take advantage of Internet-specific technologies such as Java to improve performance and features.



CURRENT GAMES: Duke Nukem 3D, Quake, Deadlock, Dark Suns, Necrodome, Warcraft, Terminal Velocity, Panzer General, Command and Conquer. UPCOMING TITLES: Shadow Warrior.

Blood, Prey, Big Red Racing, Total Mayhem, Confirmed Kill, Deathtrap Dungcon, SimCity 2000, Falcon 4:0, Top Gun, Silencer, Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games, CivNet, Wizhall RATES: The first 25,000 TEN customers will be able to take advantage of special half-price charter rates. There are two rate plans:



Hourly Rate Plan: \$4.95 monthly fee (regular rate: \$9.95 monthly fee). Includes 5 hours a month. \$0.95 per additional hour (regular rate:

\$1.95 per hour] and an additional \$0.95 per hour when connecting via a TEN local-access number (provided by the Concentric Network). Flat-Rate Plan: \$14.95 monthly fee (regular rate: \$29.95 monthly fee) provides unlimited hours (plus an additional \$0.95 per hour if connecting).

via a TEN local-access number).

PUSES: The 3D Realms deal (which includes Duke 3D), plus the overall amount of new high profile games coming to the service. Dark Suns Online is one of the very few graphics-based RPGs on the Next, and is ADACD-based system/world is one of the best known in the garning community. MINUSES: TEN is noticeably more finicity than any of the other services about latency issues. As a result, those with Internet connections that have a trendency to be sporty are going to have a

hard time with Duke, Quake, and other fast-action games (and TEN tends to fall back on its pay-by-the-boar direct-connect numbers to make up for it, Given the number of different ISPs throughout the country, this is a big problem—one that TEN will either have to deal with very soon or risk losing potential customers. Also, the non-charter rates are rather expensive, specially when you add them to the cost of your ISP subscription. And TEN's social interface is far more basic than those of its competition.

Mplayer (www.mplayer.com)

VERVIEW: Mplayer doesn't have quite as impressive a list of coming attractions as TEN, but it has a number of advantages in terms of user-friendliness. Rather than bothering you with a Mr. Bandwidth-like restrictive entity, Mplayer simply marks gaming rooms that your connection is unfit for. And all of Mplayer's game servers reside on PSInet's Internet backbone, "We use the advanced features of the Internet like frame relay, to [send data more directly to Mpath servers]," says Paul Matteucci, Mpath's president and CEO. "That decreases the latency. Plus, we create permanent virtual circuitsall of the game packets are tagged with priority so that they don't have to wait in line at a

router behind e-mail or a file download."

Mplayer also has a more cohesive social
environment. You choose the game you
want to play and click to go to its specific

server; from there, you either wait in the main lobby and chat, enter a room that's already been created, or create a room yourself. Once you've made a room, you can lock it, then invite members in with Mplayer's "pager"—much

like a private mes-

sage in a chat room. Also, within these rooms, you can use your PCs microphone to actually send voice chat. (Right now, only MechWarrior 2 allows the use of this feature during gameplay; press the Scroll Lock to talk.)

For the most part, Mplayer games run exceptionally well. Action games like MechWarrior 2 play very smoothly, even with a less-than-sterling connection. Yet, most users are found in one of two places: the Quake server or Command and Conquer. C&C runs great most of the time, and Ouake usually runs well.

CURRENT GAMES: Quake, Command and Conquer, C&C: Covert Operations, Warcraft, Terminal Velocity (shareware only), MechWarrior 2 (Win 95 version)

UPCOMING TITLES: Diablo, War Wind, Panzer General (online only), Deadlock, Battleship, Big Red Racing, Havoc, Monopoly, Q-Ball (Quake modification exclusive to Mplayer), Risk, Scrabble, SimCiry 2000 Network Edition

RATES: Mpath Interactive's Mplayer is offering limited-time charter rates to everyone who signs up by Jan. 31, 1997. Basic pricing for charter members is \$7.95 for 5 hours, \$2.99 for each additional hour. Charter price for unlimited usage is \$19.95 per month or \$199.95 for a year. Standard pricing be-



gins Feb. 1, 1997; the rates are as follows: \$9.95 for 5 hours per month (\$1.95 each additional hour), \$19.95 for 15 hours a month (\$1.25 each additional hour), \$29.95 a month for unlimited access, and \$299.95 for 12 months of unlimited access. All members will receive 10 free hours when they sign up for the service.

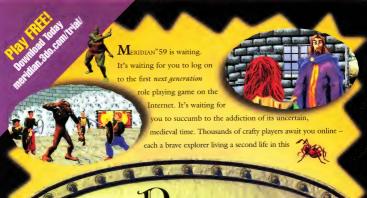
PUSSES: Mplayer deals with lattency issues very well and has a user-friendly, social air to it. Also important is the fact that Mplayer has a live, online custome-support server, so you always know where to go for help. Med Waffer 2, CACC, Quake, War. Wind, and Dishlo are all solid, higher profile Internet games for the service, and I generally found Quake to run better over Mplayer than on TEN. You could probably get a better game on a deficated Quake server it everyone thad a great connection, but on Mplayer you won't be bothered with any of the technical work younger.

MINUSESS Since action games are really the cash cows of this market, TEN's 3D Realms deal will tend to overshadow what looks to be a steady flow of Mplayer games, most of which are middle-range titles. That means Mplayer is going to have to get some seriously attractive exclusives, and soon. As with TEN, the non-charter princing plan is rather excensive as well.

battle.net

(www.battle.net)

CURRENT GAMES: Obablo, Starcraft
Much like Microsoft's Gaming Zone (see
page 79), battle net is simply a place on the
Internet to play the games of one particular
company. But since the company is Bilzzard
and the games are Diablo and Starcraft,
battle net is sure to be one of the most
popular sites for some time to come. What
it is, essentially, is a grouping site. Come to
play Diablo and the server automatically
matches you up with players who have
good connections in relation to you.
battle net will be a free service and will
be shipping with Diablo.



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Engage (www.gamesonline.com)

VERVIEW: Engage has two aces in its hole: exclusive access to Interplay titles, and exclusive access to the wildly popular Warcraft II. Plus, Engage is being designed to be easily accessible-it won't just be on the Internet, but AOL and Prodiev as well.

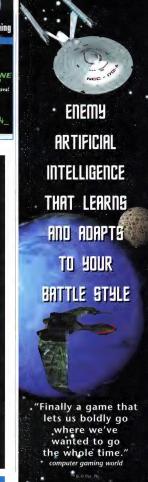
As far as latency issues, Engage president leff Leibowitz says: "We're generally pretty comfortable at anything under a second. The services usually give us anywhere from 300 to 800 milliseconds in latency, and all of our games play very, very well in that space, so we don't really need a traditional low-latency solution, although we are working with the Concentric Network for people who do want truly low-latency systems."

Descent and Rolemaster: Magestorm. the two Engage titles I tested over the Internet, both played great, with virtually no latency problems at all. Working with AOL and Prodigy, however, has caused some problems due to the fact that both services are essentially chat-based, so Engage's launch for the two has been delayed while certain latency issues are resolved. When it is launched, though, Engage will likely be integrated into the overall interface of these online services. Of course, until the new Internet rates are set, you'll still be playing at the services' normal connection rates (AOL gamers can take advantage of the new flat rate of \$18.95 per month, though).

Engage will be broader than the other Net gaming services in terms of its social structure, with things like the Human

Microsoft's The Gaming Zone (www.zone.com)

CURRENT GAMES: Various card and board games, Hellbender, Monster Truck Madness, Close Combat, and any future Internetplayable games from Microsoft The same concept as battle.net. the Zone is mainly a place to play the new Internet-compatible Microsoft games. Go to the Zone's Web site, click on the game you want to play (both the full and trial versions have their own servers). and you'll find yourself at a chat room where you can join or create games to play. The site automatically tells you the quality of your connection by putting a colored dot above the player listing-if it's green, you're all set, yellow is middle of the road, and red is a definite no way. It's all very simple. but doesn't always work right yet, Still, it's a smart step in the right direction, and Microsoft has expressed a strong commitment to making sure the Zone improves and grows. This matching service is, of course, completely free, but you need Microsoft's Internet Explorer to play.



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Corel Gallery WIN3.1 386, 4mb or MAC LCII, 2mb, N	Clip Art Library 1, K, P	5010301
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Chessmaster 5000 WIN '95 486/66, 8mb, M	Strategy Game	5083605
Warhammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat WIN3.1 486/66, 8mb, M	Strategy Game	5083506
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WEW WINS.1 486/50, 8mb, M	Children's Ed.	5086836
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ount of RAM required, and required peripherals emouse, J=joystick, K=keyboard, P=printer). For all tibles, the minimum system requirements recommended (unless otherwise indicated) are: Hardwere SVGA monitor (256 colors), sound caref, 40mb hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive. Operating System DOS 5.0, Windows 3.1, Macintoch System 7.0.

plete details in coupon).

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Social Studies: Building An Online Community

One of the major focuses of online gaming services, saide from the games, is the idea of bringing more social interaction onboard. All three services feel that this aspect of multiplayer gaming is absolutely parameum to their success of its service. So what is each one doing about it?

TEN was intially focusing on games with only williamin clust rooms, but has since added class and ranking systems (like Mplayer), unline contexts, editorial context in its Datasphere section, and even use-content forums. TEN but Suns game by adding things such as guid rooms and primarily adding things such as guid rooms and primarily game by adding things such as guid rooms and primarily game by adding things such as guid rooms and to the primarily gains from the property of the primarily gains on the primarily gains on the primarily gains and expand of the chatting uptions.

Engage obviously has major plans concerning the social supects of its service. "Well feel that the social interaction element is equal to or more important than the paness," president Jeff leibovitz comments. "Community is really what it's all about. When you put a game online it becomes a magnet for social interaction. Our 50 percent of the ratific on pann enterviets has traditionally been chat, so those kinds of elements are perhaps the critical elements of volat makes for a successful game service. Of course, if you pull away the games, the chat rooms won't be as nounless of their eventualities.

"It's sind of like the feature-film industry in that this will be a largely hit-driven business." Leibovoitz says. "So, you do need the hits. On the other hand, you need a nice: thenter for people to see those 'mories' in. If you have a really unattractive, not-fam-to-be-in fleature, people word go; they'll go to somehody else's and they may even skip oping to a movie they want to see because your theater is unappealing. Howing a nice environment for the top content is really what we'll focus on."

Mplayer plans to expand by adding voice chat to the payer function to create something like a private phone booth, as well as generally improving its interface. The goal here is to have technology for communication, then places like fact rooms to communicate, explains CED Paul Mattasco: "And here to have excuses to communicate, which requires the most creativity. You have to build all of these (aspects) into the sorries for people to build with own community online."—**JDFA**

Bean Café (actor Michael Keaton is actually a main backer of this "cv-

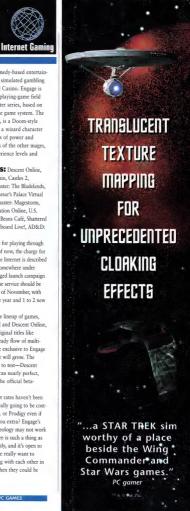
ber-cafe" that room), comedy-based entertainment at The Improv, and simulated gambling at Casar's Palace Virtual Casino. Engage is also broadening the role-playing-game field with its original Rolemaster series, based on the Iron Crown Enterprise game system. The first of these, Magestorm, is a Doom-style shooter where you create a wizard character and try to take over pools of power and destroy the power centers of the other mages, all the while gaining experience levels and

SCHEDULED GAMES: Descent Online, Descent Into Undermountain, Castles 2, BartlchChess 4000, Rolemaster: The Bladdeands, Total Control Football, Caesar's Palace Virtual Casino, Warcraft II, Rolemaster: Magestorm, Spelaterball, The Improvisation Online, U.S. Chees Federation, Human Beans Café, Shattered Steel, Sipstream 5000, Billboard Livet, AD&D: Drason Dice.

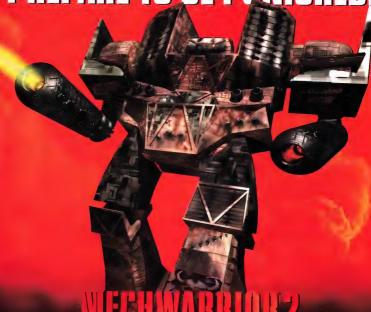
RATES No extra charge for playing through AOL and Prodigy, but as of now, the charge for directly playing through the Internet is described as "competitive" (expect somewhere under \$2.50 an hour). A full-fledged launch campaign will start in Janaury, but the service should be fully functional by the end of Novembes, with 10 games by the end of the year and 1 to 2 new sames each month.

PLUSES: An impressive lineup of games, especially with Warcraft II and Descent Online, in addition to plenty of original titles like Magestorm. Interplay's steady flow of multiplayer-ceady games will be exclusive to Engage and ensure that the service will grow. The games that I had a chance to test—Descent Online and Magestorm—ran nearly perfect, and this was before even the official beta-testing period.

MINUSES: The Internet rates haven't been determined yet, but is it really going to be cost-effective to play over AOL or Producy even if using Engage won't cost you extra? Engage's "all things to all users" ideology may not work entirely to its benefit. There is such a thing as spreading yourself too thinly, and it's open to speculation whether people really want to spend their time interacting with each other in chat-only environments when they could be interacting in games.



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VERVIEW: Kali is an IPX emulator, on a service like TEN and the others. It's a little program that enables your Internet connection to fool a game into thinking that it is hooked up to an IPX network. The reason why Kali is a great thing for gamers who can use it is that most MPG games have an IPX network mode for multiplay. That's not to say that Kali will run all of them—it won't. But it will enable you to play a varied selection, as its games list suggests.

Simply download the software from the Kali site, pay the creator of Kali, Jay Cotton, a \$20 shareware fee, and that's it-no more fees. There are three versions of Kali: KaliDOS, Kali95, and a Macintosh version. The downside of Kali, and the inherent advantage of services like TEN and Mplayer, is that it simply isn't all that user-friendly. You have to manually keep track of ping times for the server, yourself, and the other players, along with proper game execution and various other things that the services do automatically. Also, Kali servers are essentially general servers (there are very few servers for specific games), so you have to search around for people who want to play the same game you do. Also, some major games just don't run all that well-Duke is far better on TEN, for example.

CURRENT GAMES: Warcraft and Warcraft II, Descent and Descent II, Command and Conquer, Deadlock, MissionForce: CyberStorm, Duke Nukem 3D, NetMech (MechWarrior 2), MW2: Mercenaries, Big Red Racing, and many other IPX games

PLUSES: That \$20 one-time fee makes Kail one of the best deals on the Internet. Lots of games work over Kail, and the program has gained an international community of players. Depending on the game, performance can be as good as the other services, and Kail's function as a straightforward IPX emulator, along with its low-key, fairly non-commercial existence, makes the need for licensees and marketing unnecessary.

MINUSES: Kall is definitely not for everyone. The technical aspects of Internet gaming that the other services try to keep in the background tend to come right to the forefront—especially latency issues—and tech support is handled through e-mail only. Also, Kali95 and KaliMac are still in the beta stages, and are likely to be for some time. Not all games are supported, particularly DirectX games; however, Cotton says there will be native Direct X support down the road.



PC Games tested the various gaming services using a Pentium 133 with 24MB of RAM; the connection was over a 28.8Kbps modern. All tests were done via the EarthLink Network through a fink in West Virginia.



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A revolutionary tactical-level military sim that's reason enough to have Win 95. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD; \$44.95)

Duke Nukem 3D

Quake's rival for the top first-person action shooter-especially in multiplayer mode, (FormGen; 800-367-6436; DOS CD; \$39.99)

Fantasy General

The newest entry in the General series offers solid wargaming from start to finish. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; \$50)

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Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

Awesome sound effects and a compelling story help make Terra Nova the most immersive combat experience around. (Virgin: 800-874-4607; DOS CD; \$59.95)

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GAMES

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can start to have fun? (The less the better.) Graphics: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?

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THE MONTH

Toonstruck

By Peter Olafson





oonstruck starts out so sweet and safe that you could just vomit. The king's head is a happy face. His doormen are a pair of chirpy armadillos. The country is called Cutopia, and you're building something called a Cutifier.

Excuse me—is there a cutesickness bag in the house?

Indeed, you may think after the first 15 minures or so that Toonstruck is a misfiled children's game. I saw it early in its development, knew what was coming, and still, was fooled good and proper. The early scenes are so patently inoffensive that I kept wondering when I was going to fill out a multiplication table or outline a sentence.

Nothing could be further from the truth. We've been set up by experts. Toonstruck, the first release from Virgin's new Burst label, builds up the sugar only to tear it down. This masterful hybrid of Who Framed Roger Rabbit artistry and Day of the

Can you say "twisted"?

Tentacle-era LucasArts is a wicked production number, golden with the promise of the medium and the intelligence of its creators.

This two-CD animated adventure pairs Drew Blanc (a filmed Christopher Lloyd) and Flux Wildly (a high-spirited lavender blob with the voice of Dan Castellanetta, TV's Homer Simpson) on a quest to save Cutopia from the clutches of the evil Nefarious (the voice of Tim Curry).

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Actually, Toonstruck starts in the real world. Drew animates the most saccharine of saccharine cartoons, "The Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun Show." For its 10th anniversary, his boss—that fellow famour from commercials for his bore-you-to-death voice—decrees there's to be a "Fluffy & Friends" show and orders Drew to produce its characters by the next morning.

Drew is slaving over the project at 4 a.m. when he finds the "Fluffy" cartoon inexplicably on the air. On inspecting it more closely, he's



sucked through the TV screen...and winds up in a castle in Cutopia with his cartoon creation, Flux. The king (the voice of M*A*S*H's David Ogden Stiers) hands the two the mission, and you're on your own.

The Wizard of Gz.

And Cutopia—sickeningly sweet, Disney-esque Cutopia—is just the beginning. You'll also have to explore Flux's home, Zanydu, where you'll find an octopus played by Dom DeLuise, and Nefarious' strange Malevolands.

Once you're out of the castle, you'll begin to discover that everything is not quite the sweetness and light is appeared to be within. In town, you'll find a bar with an outrageous pipe organ and a seemingly impossibleto-catch mouse making faces at the patrons. The bartender speaks in an Irish accent in one sentence and a Scottish one in the next.

"That's an interesting organ you have there," Drew tells him. "Auch!" says the bartender. "My kilt's riding up again, isn't it?"

Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.

Just south of town, you'll find a little bunny with huge eyes who giggles every other sentence. (Is that barf bag still around?) Talk abour deconstruction: She screams like a banshee because someone gave her conton candy instead of pop-corn, rells you how care her "poops" are, and asks, "Want to sniff my sweet fluffy bottom?" You shouldn't be surprised to learn that Flux's response is imbued with a certain amount of Pee-Wee Herman.

To the west, an effeminate scarecrow resides.

"This old thing?" this lispy creature



tells the pair, when complimented on his cape. "Hate it. I call it Cape Fear."

And then there's the old horse at a nearby barn. Unlike the cow and sheep who share the dwelling, Get Brickhyn to kelp you with your jaur-

Elmer is "special." "Special?" asks the eversensitive Flux. "I just figured he was a total

retard or something."

No toe is immune from getting stepped on. The guard at Zanydu's fish-flushing outhouse does a splendid Jack Webb routine. The dog at the Warme store can only be Ross Perot, and elsewhere I heard echoes of Phil Silvers, Terence Stamp, and Dana Carvey's pumping-iron routine. Toonstruck makes fun of everything—nor least, cartoons.

The basic concept shouldn't hold many sur-

prises. Using a mouse, you direct Drew through 2D scenes with Flux in tow, collecting objects in a bottomless bag— yeah, it's an Object Quest—and using them to solve puzzles and satisfy the

desires of your little animated pals. The "carecrow" wants a new outfit. B.B. Wolf wants a bottle of vino. Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun wants a beating. (Just kidding: She wants popcorn.)

The artwork is classy throughout. Some of it has a Tentacle-like cast—everything slightly out of kilter—but it's much richer and glossier. Some of



the animations, such as the face-making mouse at the bar and the elephant that powers the shuttle to Zanydu, recall some of Warner Brothers' distinctive theartical shorts of the 1950s. And when our beroes finally and King Hugh's arrogant footman—lineally a foot, with a set of eyes for each to —it reminded me of nothing so much as the Wile E. Coyore carnoons of the same period.

Technologically, Toonstruck is just about flaw-

less. Lloyd is melded seamlessly into the background. The music, consisting of light classical
themes, is genuinely lovely. The
voices are clear
and distinctive—
accompanied by
text, if you like.
The game feels

The game teels special; every bit of work that Burst piled into it shows. The interface isn't especially new, but the developers didn't make any real mistakes, and you won't make any either. It's pure point-and-click, and it's difficult to imagine anyone needing to look at a manual.

Objections? Well, I don't want to spoil the

CONCE OF THE PROPERTY WAS AND A SHARE AND

The Malevolands sure looks scary.

party, but for all the good stuff, Toonstruck isn't quire laugh-out-loud finnny. Sure, it's consistently amusing, but the timing doesn't approach the heights that LucasArts reached in its Monkey Island games. (Admittedly, the challenge of a talkie adventure is greater than one that's only written.)

I also wish it was

It's Seedy, the leaft-blooking hardward?

more creative in its responses when you use an object in the wrong place. More often than nor, it tosses up a non-specific sound effect that's out of keeping with Toonstruck's anything-for-a-lough belie. And I'm no sure that the best use of Christopher Lloyd is as a straight man for a little lavender blob with green glasses. He doesn't have many chances to step out.

So there's room for improvement. But not much: By any standard, Toonstruck is one of the year's best and most daring adventures. Cutopia is on the map, and Burst is off with a bang.



DEVELOPER: Burst
Pasuswer: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607
www.toonstruck.com

DOS CD
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Amok

By Rob Smith

ACTION

aving parents with a bizarre sense of humor is not necessarily a blessing. In Amok, a Scavenger-developed action/arcade shooter, it's quite evident that the hero of the piece, Gert Staun, suffered this problem. "Gert"-c'mon, what were they thinking? Is the trauma caused by this moniker a pivotal reason behind Gert's desire to jump into the pilot's seat of an armored battle walker, dubbed the Slambird, in an attempt to kick off a new, bloody, but profitable war? Perhaps.

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Planet Amok has suffered 47 years of corporate war. The Bureau.

ployer, has benefited from this turmoil through its position as a supplier and recruiter of mercenaries and bounty hunters. However, the profit machine has now ground to a peaceful halt. By completing a series of nine missions, each featuring various tasks and objectives, you can see the benign corporations thrown back into the melting pot of destruction, And, once again, the Bureau will make a mint,

The mission briefings are well-presented, with target objects highlighted. Tasks within a mission must be completed in a logical order: For example, you'll need to destroy the generator that powers a force field before you can obliterate the fuel depot behind it.

The Slambird can adopt two forms, land- and sea-based. The ships have slight handling differences-taking your foot off the gas makes you glide to a halt underwater, but you come to a dead stop on land. Three different third-person-perspective





views let you choose the best way to witness the destruction.

Deserts, plains, and superbly detailed cities provide the land-based backdrops, each inhabited by its own indigenous range of beasts and enemies. Aside from the attentions of the corporations-



who defend their property with mechanized vehicles, stationary gun emplacements, droids, and swarms of cartoon-like, pot-bellied infantrynatural enemies such as kamikaze beetles and steeljaw rats add to the difficulty. In the submerged sections, sharks and spiked guhu fish are joined by tough scuba grunts and stationary mines in an unceasing onslaught against our hero.

In fact, there are loads of the little geezers shooting guns and bazookas from all angles of this 3D environment, aiming not just for you, but at each other. An unlimited supply of mini-cannon

> rounds, boosted in velocity and damage through powerups, is the basic weapon. Standard missiles are pretty handy, and bombs enable you to get to certain areas by taking out a large number of grunts and land mines. Heavy missiles are also needed to bash through certain

Backed by an excellent, pumping soundtrack of seven different tunes, the action is intense and non-stop. Fogging effects create a truly eerie environment, especially in the underwater segments, which is a good thing: You'll need to

keep exploring to find the secret areas hiding extra ammo and powerups.

The game loses somes points for the lack of control options: your choices are keyboard or keyboard. With just nine missions-even hugely challening missions-it may also prove too short. And the two difficulty levels are something of a misnomer-"easy" is just the first two missions of the full, "hard" game.

In the end, it's a simple concept made into a challenging arcade romp. At the higher graphic resolutions, such as 800-by-600 with 32K colors, it looks like an absolute treat, though you'll need a beast of a machine. There's certainly plenty of stuff to shootso much so that dispatching 100 percent of the enemies seems a virtually impossible task. Amok is a sheer adrenaline rush-nothing more, nothing less.



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Bedlam

By Peter Olafson

ction gamers would have to be crazy not to pay a visit to this Bedlam. This isometric shoot-fem-up—a striking composite of the Crusader- and Syndicate-style games—has enough graphic intricacies, intuitive play mechanics, and hartening explosions.

Love those explosions...

to keep you involved for weeks. As the hero, you

control up to three Mechs (here called Remote Assault Tanks) on a 25-mission campaign to remove an infestation of "biomex." (I don't know. Don't ask.)

A superb briefing display provides a detailed overhead map of the mission area with highlighted objectives that can be displayed in closeup when you click on them.

After checking out the map, you'll want to head to the armory to load up on weapons. The bad news: You have to pay for ordnance. The good news: The game auto-configures your craft to stay within budget. There are loss of options, maging from needler guns that harely kick up dust to Hades bombs that reduce whole regions to raging firestorms.

Finally, you're dropped off at the insertion point by a great gleaming aircraft. Gameplay is simplicity isselfs one mouse button for movement, one for firing. The game makes clearly audible announcements when you achieve objectives, and displays as-yet-unachieved ones on a useful (but not too useful) in-mission map.

It all looks wonderful. The explosions are the first and best reason to play Bedlam. They're glori-

Whoops, there goes another building



ous—almost epic—and they bring home the mem-

ous—aimost epic—and they bring nome the memorable satisfaction of mass destruction as well as any game in recent months.

Fortunately, there's plenty of demolition work. The missions tend to be go-in-and-blow-up chal-



lenges. That's not to say there aren't puzzles.

Objectives are often protected, remote or both.

You'll find yourself combing the landscape in search of teleporters to unlock off-limits areas, pressure pads to raise or lower sections of terrain, and control switches to disable forcefields.

Through it all, though, it's very much an action

game. Powerups strewn about the playfield add to your

score, pockerbook, erengy, and speed. Moreover, the game is full of delightful little touches other than the way things go "splat." The expositions are great, but the buildings look even better—both before and after a conflagration. You'll also see yourself performing on big-screen TV's spread throughout the levels. The playfield has depth, and you'll have to travel in tunnels (in which your character vanishes, Syndicatestyle) and on canwalks. I even liked the intro's big beat and cinematic title semence.

In fact, I have few complaints

in fact, I have few complaints



ACTION

about Bedlam. The saved-game routine is rather fragile. If you miss the opportunity to save after a mission, tough bits, babe. Ingame speech is a bit risqué, and not for any

persuasive reason. (Besides, if your Mechs are remote-controlled, who exactly is doing the talking?) And performance under Windows 95 is slightly sluggish. I'd recommend playing under DOS.

Nevertheless, this is a delightful surprise. I've got Bedlam on the brain.



GAMEPLAY: B-







ALIEN

PC-CD ROM

...OR CHUCKLE, chortle or even guffaw as you embark on your quest to solve the "Alien Incident". If you enjoy "classic" graphic adventure games where an intuitive interface and a sense of humor are the key



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of immersive gameplay. Meet interesting people such as Yodel the tree dweller, plus dozens of other strange and bizarre characters in a humorous game that's easy enough even for adults to play!







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Area 51

or a place that officially doesn't exist, Area 51's been getting an awful lot of attention lately. But its the wrong kind of attention: The purported government secret base has been infiltrated by aliens, and you're part of the special paramilitary team sent in to clean up the mess.

Let's not mince words: This conversion of the

By whatever means necessary

Atari coin-op is basically Virtua Cop with bitmapped enemies and an oddly filmed actor replacing polygons. It's a clone of that most celebrated of rail shooters, but a well-done cloneone that expands its reach and adds to its depth.

You move through the base in scripted stages, killing off formerly human caretakers (grayskinned zombies who are hosting incubating aliens) and grown aliens in "on tracks" shooting-gallery sequences. They give up the ghost in a satisfying display of blood and bone, and between alien annihilations, you can blast ammo boxes and obliterate Shoot...it's time to shoot again

floating powerups to get a hold of weapon upgrades.

In short, there's a lot to shoot, Like the Crusader games, you can trash everything: computers, barrels, window panes-even your colleagues. The explosions look real, particularly when you set off one of the yellow barrels dotting the landscape. Blowing them to hell is the way to secret rooms, a search that'll keep you coming back for more.

The backgrounds you'll be blasting are detailed and convincing-especially during a mid-game ieep sequence that's one of the game's best moments. In places, their moody look combined with the cries of your fellow troopers contributes a certain Aliens mood.

Still, the front-end looks cheesy, and the ending's rather weak. Worst of all, the game's way too short. I amazed myself by finishing the Easy setting in 45 minutes and polishing off Medium difficulty in about two hours.

I liked it. I just wanted more.

-Peter Olafson





www.gtinteractive.com Win 95 CD Pentium 60, 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), Super VGA with 1MB of video RAM, 2X CD-ROM drive, sound card, mouse LIST PRICE: \$39.99

Captain Quazar

antain Ouazar? More like Major Havoc-both for good and bad.

This Windows 95 translation of an angleddown shoot-'em-up originally appeared on 3DO. It offers enjoyable maybem when it works well, Unfortunately, as with many console ports to the PC, it doesn't work as well as it should, or as often as it should.

The Captain, a great blond lout with Popeye's chin, is assigned to take down the galaxy's bad guys in 10 missions pleasantly large in scope and rich in destruction. They're set in sprawling, multidirectional levels viewed from a third-person point of view just above and slightly downwind of the Captain. These levels-

Some bero!

siles, and grenades).

in them-come apart in rich animations. Walls, buildings, storage tanks, the works, are there to be turned into smoking ruins-if you have the time and the ammo (you start out with a Big Gun, mis-

and almost everything

Ammo, first-aid kits, and the occasional extra life are unearthed in these ruins. Sometimes, you'll smoke a building and come across a sooty survivor waving a white flag. These turncoats may offer codes to teleporters, point you toward money caches, or make known that there's more to a level than meets the eye.

As lively as it is, the game ultimately has a wearisome quality. It takes too long to get past the multi-segment intro screens and into the action. Enemies have an irritating habit of materializing out of nowhere. The scenery wasn't quite varied enough to keep my interest; it starts to look like different arrangements of the same tiles. And while the game aims for a comic-book goofiness, it isn't all that funny. (I don't like getting flamed by my boss when I pause the action.)

Worst of all, I didn't play a single session without interruption by some sort of technical problem. On a 32MB Pentium 133, the game often displayed corrupted graphics (sometimes the Captain himself was invisible!), hung up on a skipping CD soundtrack, or just plain locked up the machine.

Sorry, Cap'n. It was a nice try, but I just pressed Eject and gave your CD a dishonorable discharge. -Peter Olafson





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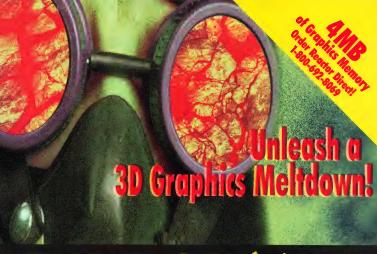
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INTERGRAPH

Sonic CD

e's back! And after all these years, he looks exactly the same! Which, of course, is the problem, I was

looking for more in Sonic's PC debut. After all, in this day of Pentium processors and 3D graphics accelerators, I didn't expect to find the same old game that's kept Genesis owners hooked for years.

Same old Hedgehog

Despite some clever new twists (the ability to teleport to

different areas of a stage by flipping signs, for example), this is still the same old Sonici dashing through one world after another collecting life rings and power emeralds, racing through the two-dimensional worlds of tunnels, cliffs, bridges, and elevators. As always, his ultimate mission is to save animals from the clutches of the evil Dr. Robotnik, though in this case, the hostage is his girlfriend, Amy the Hedgehog.

Look at that jump! Yep, you're Sonic, all right.

The one real change is an impressive 3D stage reached by nabbing more than 50 rings before finishing a level. Hit a series of flying UFOs successfully and you'll receive a Time Stone. You must acquire all seven Time

Stones before Dr. Robotnik does in order to save your darling Amy.

Lest you think it's only Sonic that has to jump through hoops, there's a few obstacles Sega has left in your path. A massive 153MB full installation is a bit excessive. (Little guy, big game.) I was also irritated to find that Sonic doesn't even remember the gamepad configurations from one session to another.

Hardware problems aside, Sonic's still a highly playable arcade game. Let's just hope that if there's a sequel, the creators bring something new to a rather old formula.

-Sam Marshall



G	AMEPLAY:	В	D-
GETTING	STARTED:	B-	
6	RAPHICS:	B-	
SOUN	ID CHECK:	C+	OVERAL
MULTI	PLAYER:	N/A	1
Still a o		rt it co	uld use some
PUBLISHER:	Sega En		ent
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WWW.sega.com Plusream: Win 95 CD Retelles: 486DX4/100 (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM, Super VGA, 2X CD-ROM drive, sound card List Pluts: 334.95

SlamScape

ntriguing storyline and brain-teasing puzzles simply don't figure in SlamScape. Plentiful dodgeand-shoot action: yes; great electronic literature: no. The plot—for what it's worth—is that you're trapped in a virtual-reality experiment along with 16 orbor continues. The alon:

16 other captives. The plan is to get you and

the other guys out of this mess. To succeed, you'll have

the next stage.

to navigate your way through four levels, dodging and destroying a variety of enemies to reach the Orb-lds. Collecting powerups and ammunition along the way will help you fight your way to them. Liberate the Orb-lds to progress to

SlamScape's designers score high marks for providing great 3D scenery. The action is smooth and fluid as you power your Slamjet Module in all directions. The Shockball is your main wearing, but your onslaught is aided by picking up torpedoes and the Ripstar, a devastating device

The third-person lew shows you more of the carnage.

with limited ammo.

Carnival of

destruction

Your enemies are equally entertaining: clown-faced balloons, tanklike assault vehicles, mechanical spiders, teddy bears with razor-

> sharp claws, electric brainfish, and flying propeller blades that pick off the powerups you've so painstakingly gathered.

You'd think such a simple areade game would be dead easy to get into, but that's not the case here. Controlling the Slamjet effectively takes some practice, and needs mastering before you can make any significant progress.

Frequent pauses in the gameplay (usually when accessing the pounding soundtrack), even on a monster PC, don't help the flow of supposedly fast-paced action. Still, SlamScape's a typical console-style title that, with the right hardware, can fly and provide uninvolved, fast, and furious gameplay.

—Sam Marshall





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Simility 2000 not required Herves of steel recommended





Grid Runner

nomewhere, in a far-flung future, the government's getting worried. Ships bound for the Nether-Planets-normally an easy trip-have been disappearing. Spaceage investigators Axxel and Tara are at a loss for clues. And to top it off, Axxel's been sucked into an intergalactic game

and given a simple choice: play or die. That's the backstory, and it's a sorry setup for

what's actually

a halfway de-

cent game.

Capture the flag-or die

Grid Runner offers you a futuristic version of capture-the-flag, pitting you against a slew of alien warriors on 15 different worlds. Be the first to nab a flag and it's run, run, run to the next one, trying to touch 'em all before your alien opponent tags you "it" and makes his

own flag dash. Waterworlds, treelands, infernos-you name it, it's one of the grid-bearing locales for this timeless sport. That kind of variety gives the chase

pion of some much-Nimbus is needed spice, as one mean do details like the minotaur nath becoming Don't let him catch slippery on the iceworld. There are also flag

guards, bombs, and pads that send you rocketing through the maze like a runaway pinball. Beneath it all is an arsenal of power-ups: teleport; run faster; lay mines; build bridges; slow or shoot your enemy.

The cham-

Slinging spells (as they're called here) while dashing frantically is arcade-style fun, and it's positively exhilarating in multiplayer games, played on the same machine using a split-screen (no networking). But you can only go so far when you've got fuzzy graphics, cheesy cut scenes, and single-player action that's shorter than it should be. If you're runnin' solo, choose another race; if you've got an opponent, step on the Grid.

-Corey Cohen





800-874-4607 www.vie.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD Pentium 90, 8MB RAM, 1 MB video card, 2X CD-ROM drive LIST PRICE: \$39.95

Creep Night

Scarv?

No way.

But this

pinball

bouse

rocks the

t takes steel balls to make a really good computer pinball game, Many designers have captured the feel of real-world pinball. but few have had ambitions beyond strict authenticity.

3-D Ultra Pinball was one game that successfully

stretched the conventions of computer pinball, and the follow-up, Creep Night, expands on that success. Like the original, Creep Night offers up to four players the ability to play three tables, each with a lightly spooky theme (Castle, Tower, and Dungeon). You can play the tables singly or together, and each one consists of a central play field with wings to the left and right (complete with flippers).

Like its predecessor, Creep Night's a perfectly modern way to play pinball, splendidly replicating the real thing and then building upon it. This silverball's flush with lithe animations and special effects that could never be achieved under the glass:



For example, a little green demon drives a car around the play field until he's squashed (for credit, of course). Balls disappear into a dimensional warp or are eaten by a roying ghost. Skeletons and Frankenstein-like monsters have to be bowled over.

Naturally, Creep Night is well-supplied with bumpers, targets, ramps, and specials. But it's also loaded with enough spectral voices and funhouse blasts of sound to make you forget just playing pinball.

It's a great game, but it's not perfect. The Dungeon table seems slightly unfinished. The ball occasionally appears to pass through the flippers and certain elements of the backdrop. The intromusic is warmed-over Danny Elfman (Batman, Beetlejuice, Tales From The Crypt), and the intro animation is curiously busy.

And I think Sierra could have coughed up something more appropriate for a Game Over sequence

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Creep Night's Castle table is the best of the three.

than the advertising blurbs ("Try Trophy Bass 2") that appear at the bottom of the display. They're certainly creepy, but not in a good way.



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AMBER: **Journeys Beyond**

t's a kooky world we live in. The X-Files is the hottest thing since the Macarena, people are shelling out big bucks for Alien Autopsy footage, and after a couple of hundred years of scientific pooh-poohing, ghosts are finally getting some respect, Somebody's got to quantify all this paranormal activity-and that's where you come in.

In AMBER, vou're cast as an employee at Bio Psi, a company that's developing such a tool. A colleague of yours. Roxy, has decided to set up shop in a deso-

Explore the unknown

known to be teeming with activity. When you go to

check up on her, her lifeless body is an unwelcome surprise. You wander the grounds and the house itself looking for clues to what's going on.

What you find is a full-blown Amityville: brilliant

water spouts form mysteriously, messages appear before you on the bathroom mirror. What'd you expect? This is the paranormal, af-

ter all. Ultimately, you learn that Roxy's spirit was scattered in the great beyond when she attempted to cross over to the other side. As if that wasn't enough, the house is haunted by three other spirits, and it's up to you to "journey beyond" and help each of them so you can get Roxy back on her feet.

None too original, but it could have been worse. Journeys Beyond is a little better than most Myst-like adventure games. The combination of decently rendered 3D graphics and ambient sounds helps create a fairly spooky environment, and the story manages to be fairly compelling, even if it is a little far-fetched.

Yep, it ain't exactly revolutionary, but for fans of the frightful. Amber makes a nice distraction between X-Files episodes. -Shane Mooney



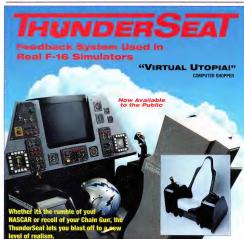
get to the bottom of Roxy's "death."

GAMEPLAY: B. GETTING STARTED: A-GRAPHICS: B-SOUND CHECK: B

MULTIPLAYER: N/A

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By Christine Lam

ADVENTURE

o you ever find yourself roaming the streets at night, an internal voice-over monologue running through your head? Do you believe everyone's out to get you? Do you fear foreigners and brutalize evil, manipulative women? Do you find Peter Lorre creepy, but oddly deserving of sympathy? If you've responded yes to all of these questions, you're either a paranoid, psychotic misogynist or an avid film noir fan. Either way, you may be interested in Cyberdreams' Noir, a "shadowy thriller" designed to simulate the gumshoe detective stories immortalized by Raymond Chandler and Mickey Spillane.

As an anonymous associate of missing detective Iack Slavton, you click through gorgeously filmed black-and-white screens, attempting to solve the cases lack left behind-including the mystery surrounding his disappearance. Throughout the six cases, you pick up clues and meet with characters portrayed on video, who explain their role in these events. You must find a missing heiress, solve a security problem, discover the mystery behind a rare book, retrieve a missing dog, investigate the death of a race horse, and break up a shady Chinese shipping ring.

It all sounds much more challenging than it really is. Although a certain amount of timing and perception are needed to solve the cases, Noir probably won't occupy the seasoned adventurer for long. Some of the mysteries aren't that mysterious, and can even border on the ridiculous, though they do overlap in such a way that the events in one case affect the others.

Get used to this view-you'll be seeing it a lot.

Meanwhile, the video footage features overacting and melodrama that will have you frantically hitting the Esc key to end a sequence. In terms of thrills, Noir is more Murder, She Wrote than Murder, My Sweet, Your most harrowing experience is being hypnotized by Nazis and ending up in the gutter sans memory (giving you the painful task



Wo-Tan, the Wonder Dog.

aren't enough of those touches to keep one interested for an extended amount of time. If you're a huge film noir fan and remember

Barbara Stanwyck as a seductive vixen worth killing for in Double Indemnity, you may have some interest in the game, at least for its breathtaking graphics. But if you remember Stanwyck as a perverse old woman pawing Richard Chamberlain in The Thorn Birds, and wonder why people even bother watching black-and-white movies anymore, perhaps it's best to steer clear of Noir altogether.



those Nazis

of starting over if you didn't save).

Noir makes light of the clichéd elements of film noir, causing some confusion about whether it's a spoof or an actual thriller. If it aims for thriller, it lacks the basic themes and attitudes of film noir. Every possibly offensive moment is gut-

> ted, probably to maintain political correctness. Violence and hatred toward women and immigrants, as well as the feelings of fatalism, anger, and alienation, are integral to film noir, whether one approves of them or not. Without them, it simply isn't film noir-it's just parody or struggling atmosphere.

Although Noir is visually impressive, only the most die-hard aficionados will appreciate the photography enough to plod through the mediocre gameplay. Subtle attention to small details helps-the precise use of keys, a video projector, an elevator panel-but there



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▼ Make sure you save after each ma

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TIPS jor breakthrough in each case. Failure to do so will yield much aggravation. V Use the cursor to explore every nook and cranny of each location, especially Jack's office. If you miss s thing, it could cost you later. Will you get stuck, call Jack's informant from your Rolodex for suggestions. and if you forget where you left off in the game, check your notehook in the lower-lefthand drawer of Jack's desk. V Although you can pick up clues in Jack's office separately with each case, it's much easier to take care of them all at once









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Meridian 59

By Peter Olafson

Rule the world (or at least, a world)





illary's right: It really does take a village. And I can think of no better illustration than my recent experiences in Meridian 59.

I guess I should start at the beginning. A few days ago, my review of this Internet-based 3D multi-user dungeon (MUD)

was shaping up as a rather mixed bag. After a few hours online with the inviting game engine— Doom-like movement with role-playing features and a text parser—the actual game seemed daunting.

Its strong points were obvious. The engine is an utter delight; a standalone RPG would be hardpressed to top the features. Detailed descriptions are a click away. The automap can be annotated, and key locations in the five cities are already identified. The parset is rich and flexible; you talk to people in your immediate area or "broadcast" Meridain-wide messages. The graphics aren't up to the best 3D games, but they work with smooth movement. The sound is amospheric.







It was easy to install, and almost as easy to get up and running. (Netscape Personal Navigator 2.02 is bundled.) And latency? What's latency? For all intents and purposes, Meridian played as

if it all resided on my machine. Even building a character—a pleasant, graphically oriented procedure in which you customize your face, stats, and skills—was a breeze.

The problem was, I couldn't get anywhere. My irst day went something like this: I went out of town to find adventure. I got killed by a large insect. (A baby spide, no less.) Sans worddly goods, I had to negotiate winding staircases leading from the Underworld to one of Meridian's inns. I fell off several times before I reached the top. I went out of town to find adventure. I got killed by a large insect...

And so on. I felt like a country boy who gets mugged on his first night in the big city and staggers out of an alley in his underwear. When I logged on for a final go, I wasn't expecting much—except maybe to help feed Meridian's arachnoid population.

But then, something unexpected happened: I met someone. I don't know why he took me in hand, but he did. He gave me armor, a better weapon, and 2,000 shillings, and escorted me to the bank to stash it for safekeeping.

Now I'm killing baby spiders and worse, and I don't feel as though I'm wearing my mortality on my sleeve. Of course, there's a catch: My friend wants me to join his guild once I reach a certain level of proficiency. "Think of it as grease," he told me mildly.

Hey, I can live with that. The lesson is that the engine is just a facilitator, and that any online game is only as good as the people playing. I'm still a stranger in a strange land, uncertain of my



standing, and small hairs on the back of my neck still stand on end when I see movement on the horizon. (There are some real villains lurking out there. I've seen three reports of cold-blooded murders while online.)

But now I know someone, and I feel as though I have a future. And that makes all the difference. You see the world differently when you're not staring into the abyss. Possibilities are emerging, and the potential of Meridian is vast. This online village has done its iob.

GAMEPLAY:





By Steve Klett

The Hind can carry hundreds of rockets, making it an ideal close support helicopter.

FLY & DRIVE



elicopter sims have always focused on American gunships, so it's refreshing to get the opportunity to fly a war machine of foreign origin: the Russian Mil Mi-24 Hind. Digital Integration and Interactive Magic-the makers of last year's excellent Apache sim-are at it again.

The Hind is an assault helicopter capable of carrying troops to the field of battle and supporting them with an awesome array of firepower, Heavily armored, the Hind is an ugly, fearsome beast designed to give and receive punishmentbut not to be quick on its feet, which may seem strange to Apache flyers. They'll also have

One mean. mean flying machine

to get used to targeting and weapons systems that are much less flashy and high-

tech, as the Hind's design is definitely a case of muscle over sophistication in nearly every respect.

By no means does that make it less fun to fly the Hind. It's just a different experience-but a welcome one. Buzzing an enemy airfield and strafing a row of parked MiGs while taking an incredible pounding from anti-aircraft fire-and survivingprovides an awesome rush. The Hind may be a



beast, but it's amazingly durable, extremely deadly, and well-respected by its enemies.

While Hind is a sophisticated, realistic sim designed with hard-core PC pilots in mind, Digital Integration made every effort not to exclude the more casual flyer. A Quickstart option lets novices jump in the Hind with unlimited ammo and blow up everything in sight. You can even select invincibility for an unrivaled killfest.

Three flight model modes let you select the desired level of realism. An extensive series of training missions introduces the Hind's boom, missile, and projectile weaponry and handling characteristics before you jump into career missions.

And you'll want to embark on a career. Hind offers three challenging campaigns set in Korea, Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan that advance in difficulty and provide a total of 30 riveting mis-

> sions. The missions themselves are suitably varied, including escort jobs, troop insertion and retrieval. ground troop support. search and destroy, bombing, and reconnaissance.

An impressive array of multiplayer options lets you fly head to head or cooperatively, pairing up with a friend to crew the same helicopter (one of you is the pilot, the other's the Weapons Systems Officer, or gunner). Then

there's a deathmatch option with up to 15 other pilots on a network, and a network team game where one team must destroy the other's headquarters. The cherry on top is Hind's ability to

be networked with DI's Apache, pitting you as Russia's firepower and strength against America's nimble, high-tech attack chopper (or vice versa).

Perhaps no other sim to date has captured the feel of taking part in an actual battle as well as DPs Apache, an asset continued with Hind. As you fly to your mission target, there's plenty of activity going on around, above and below you-artillery fire bursting on the ground, tanks battling it out, fighters dogfighting, and troop convoys bustling on the highways. Meanwhile, endless radio chatter from your allies heightens the sense of realism.

As you can tell, we like this sim, and if you've flown Apache, you'll understand why. Hind has the same quality feel as its predecessor, and while it's a snap to get into, it's a challenge to master. Try it, comrade-you won't be disappointed.





800-699-4263 www.imagicgames.com DOS/Win 95 CD PLATFORM:

Bromers: 486/66, DOS 5.0 or Win 95, 8MB RAM (16MB with Win 95). Super VGA, 2X CD-ROM drive LICT PRICE: \$49.95

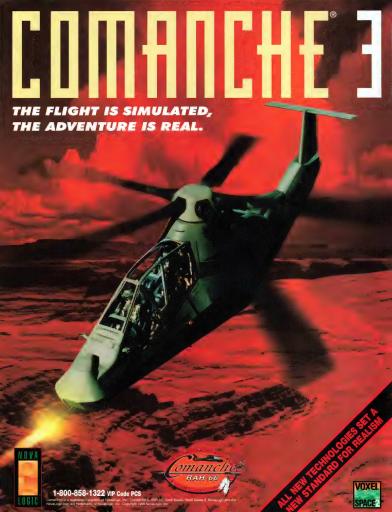
TIPS Use the external view (F6) when landing—it's easier to judge the distance to the ground and your rate of descent. ▼ Don't stray from your mission parameters. If you pursue all the extra targets, you'll find yourself beaten up and out of ammo by the time you get to your objective. V Stay low and slow at the target area. If you're too high, you're an easy target for ground fire, and if you're flying too fast, you won't be as nimble as you need to be. ▼ Remember, the Hind carries extra supplies on board-you can re-

load many of your weapons by landing in a quiet PLAY THE DEMO ON C GAMES. EXE CD-ROM

area during a mission.



enemy's perspective, are particularly entertaining when you're strafing enemy broops out in the open.



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Shattered Steel

By Rob Smith

FLY & DRIVE



echanized combat games are undoubtedly a popular, timehonored formula. We've all played in futuristic landscapes full of deadly robots piloted by fearless Rambo-esque characters. But few have matched Shattered Seel's look, style, and scintillating action.

Developed by BioWare, a Canadian-based group led by three medical doctors with a penchant for creating video games in their spare time, Shattered Steel takes every element of the game and tops. It First off, there's be atoryline. The future, no surprise there, warring corporations battling for natural resources, still no shocks; benecis good game-post, seen that, too. So what's

Kill without

so good about it? The way it all gels together over the

course of 50 absorbing missions. That's not including the 15 multiplayer-specific missions, to be fought in deathmatches for up to 16 players.

The mission structure on Lanios 3, the first port of call, is initially pretry simple—defend a communications outpoot, protect a bunch of escaping prisoners, attack a convoy. Yet each mission hides anywhere from one objective to four or free. AINIC, an onboard computer, is there to show you the way. From starbase Flydra IV, you take to you Corverte transporter for travel to the



Az Aspis euts laser as a Ceal econiers too close to live much longer. A line of Basilisks gets some cannon fire up the butt.

mission location. Onboard the Corvette are your two Planet Runners (the second gives you an extra life should a mission go pear-shaped).

The Corvette also includes the storeroom where Runners are equipped. A significant array of weaponty—lasers, mines, mortars, nukes, lamethrowers, cannons, and more—can be found or salvaged on plante sturfaces, which you use to upgrade the Runner. In addition, the chassis, reactor, and shield levels have three levels of strength. Careful selection of primary and secondary weapons could make the difference between missions success and abject failure.

Once you hit the surface, things really heat up. Aside from the excellent shading of the landscapes, the Runner cockpit is highly detailed. An external view of the first-person action is a perfect example of how you don't need 30 hardware to achieve fast-paced, beautifully shaded locations.

Twenty-some enemies throw all kinds of plasma in your direction. Fortunately, you're not always alone. Shuttles and other Runners help you fight Gnats, Basilisks, and Aspis in assaults that require decreous use of the fairly complex controls. Unfortunately, your allies are usually killed far too

quickly to be of much use.

Backed by some oustanding sound effects—check out the spinning shot of the 50mm cannon—the various enemies, style of missions, and frepower at your disposal make for an incredibly interse experience. My only real criticism is that while the missions fit the pattern of evolving stories on each of the planes that need liberating, they're somewhat repetitive in flavor. That's despite a tremenflavor. That's despite a tremen-

both in color and contours, that makes aiming,

moving, and shooting a real challenge at times.





Really, though, it's a minor quibble. In the long run, there's enough simulation and action to please MechWarrior devotees and twitch gamers alike.

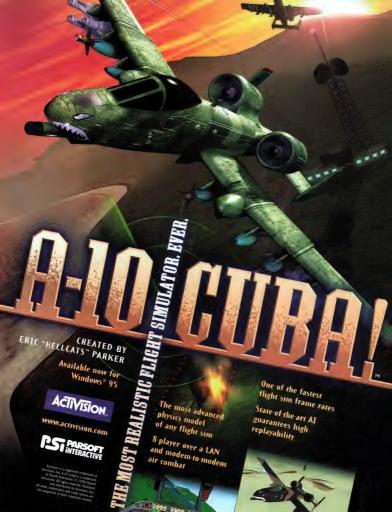


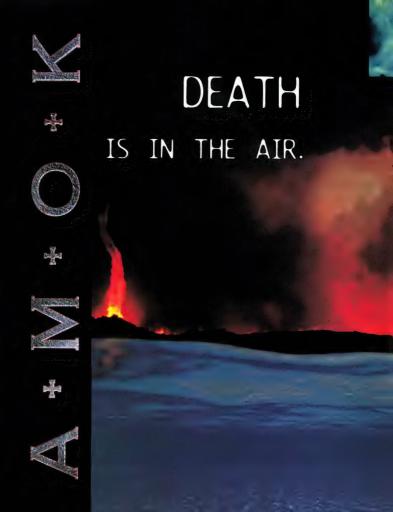
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PLATFORM: DOS CD

REUNIES: 486DX/66 (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB rec.), 2X CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card List Pate: \$49.95

TIPS ▼ Configure the contros to set you move the Runner shead quickly and easily. ▼ Aim for enemies' bodies with your Issers. Don't shoot maniscally, or you'll overheat. ▼ When firing, bear in mind that your missiles are fired from the top of the Runner (e.g., don't shoot them when you're night next to an alien.) ▼ use prover to reinforce the shields as they're depleted. Staying alive as long as possible is the key to winning missions:









War Wind

By Rob Smith

Ob look. it's War.

STRATEGY

here's no end to the evergrowing real-time strategy stakes-and now comes another potential contender for Warcraft II's

See, I've already mentioned "it." There's just no getting away from comparing all fantasy and real-time strategy games to Blizzard's classic. Perhaps that's unfair: When a competitor like War Wind comes along, it could

be unduly penalized just because it doesn't get the juices flowing in the same way.

But before we pass judgments, let's set the scene. War Wind takes place on the world of Yayaun, a planet boasting a strange enchantment that offers magic to its inhabitants as they battle each other for dominance. Woven through a detailed, well-documented history are four very distinct and very weird races, each with bones to pick with the others

The Tha' Roon have been the dominant race for eons, much to the annoyance of the Obblinox, who acted as their warriors to ensure military might, and to the perpetual insult of the Eaggra, who tended the land and provided the slave foundations on which all great empires are built. The fourth race are the weirdos. The Shama' Li hold a spiritual position and are now seeking to unite the four factions, rather than wage war with any of the other three, (Are you still with me?)

The major departure from a pure Warcraft-style game is the development of characters through multiple scenarios. Eight characters are selected at the end of every scenario to continue the fight. This requires



the crossive of a large-scale bat

its own strategic planning, because leaving yourself short of workers to mine resources and build unit types proves fatal without a few judicial selections.

War Wind is hard going initially; it demands a high level of detail, of the "build x to get y and z number of y to get w" sort. Also, while the motives of elves, dwarves, and orcs require only a very basic knowledge of the fantasy milieu, you're gonna have to do some reading before immersing vourself in the struggles of Yavaun.

Protecting the clan leader is the bottom line for succeeding in each race's seven basic scenarios: He dies, you lose, Surround him with mages and more advanced characters by mining resources and building certain units. Not only does each race have its own building types and resources, but unit types can be bio-upgraded through research, so there's plenty of background to master before making significant progress. Once the hattle has been won with one race, you try it using any of the others.

Combat is quite manic, although it can be structured through careful use of the 20-plus command options. Several build options are also available, presented in a simple interface that enables

> quick reactions to battle situations. None of the building and ordering of units is helped by the creatures' responses. Hideous screeches that pass for each bizarre race's language don't help the atmosphere.





A very simple campaign editor adds a little play longevity, as does the multiplayer option, although even here the intense resource management needed to start moving gets in the way.

War Wind tries to forge its own niche, and it may well do that. But the level of background to be uncovered and plodding early pace in each campaign makes it difficult to lose yourself in either the fantasy or the game.





800-601-7529 www.warwind.com Win 95 CD Pentium 60, 16MB RAM, 1MB

Super VGA, 2X CD-ROM drive List Paire \$54.99 To get a head start on gathering resources and building structures, always

carry at least one worker over from mission to mission. Y Your storage warehouse should be the first structure you build, unless you already have one. V multiplayer games, kill your opponents' worker just after they've gathered resources. They'll drop the goods

HEATS V During gameplay, in Linux, type one of these codes: V The During gameplay, hit Enter, then Sun Also Rises: Removes Fog of Wer ▼ !Golden Boy: Adds 5,000 resource points to your Clans resource total



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Blood & Magic

By Barry Brenesal

nterplay's first foray into TSR's Forgotten Realms world gives D&D fans a taste of the high-fantasy dragon-slay-

and easy ing, spell-weaving exploits

Realms-quick

that typify their hobby. Set in the kingdom of Doegan, Blood & Magic is a real-time strategy game that's surprisingly easy to learn.

Delving into a strange world of magic and monsters, dungeons and dragons, you begin the quest with a Bloodforge and a basal golem. The Bloodforge acts as a storehouse and distributor of

magical energy; the golem is a strange morphing creature. In its stationary pyramid form, the golem gradually generates energy that can be transmitted to the forge. It can also wander around to open up the surrounding terrain. Place the golem next to a foundation (a specialized transforming object, like a crypt) and it changes into any creature you've researched.

Rangers, mages, zombies, banshees, and furies make up the 16 creature types that the basal golems can assume, each displaying its own benefits and drawbacks. Switching between these forms allows the golem to navigate various terrains-marsh, rivers, mountains, etc.-and deal with the enemies encountered there more effectively. Artifacts found lying about can enhance a creature's abilities in fairly standard ways, such as healing lost hit points, enhancing strength, and in-





Next to all those features, your own options seem a bit slim. There are no spells to learn, structures to create or weapons to forge. You don't harvest resources or form diplomatic relationships. And there's no dialogue between characters. Since there's not much to do, learning how to play isn't particularly difficult. But if you need help, Blood & Magic

> terrain. There's also a step-by-step tutorial that sees you through the basics of exploration, transforma-

heroic, you can battle through five clearly defined but unrelated campaigns of varying difficulty, across randomly generated maps, Each campaign offers three scenarios: complete all three successfully,

and you win the campaign.

Blood & Magic's fun to play, with a learning curve that's as flat as the Florida landscape. And yet again, the game's a little thin: thin on options, monster types, graphics, spells, scenarios, and worst of all, excitement. Heroes of Might & Magic gave you randomly generated maps, a user map editing and saving facility, selectable AI levels, and adjustable starting resources; you'll get none of these from Blood and Magic. At the same time, Warcraft and Warhammer are both more lavish in the real-time action department.

The main screen shows

been 2D isometric state-of-the-art about three years ago. It's good-quality VGA at 300-by-200 resolution and 256 colors, but not quite up to the

Visually, this

game would have

visually appealing level of more recent games like Heroes. All things considered, Blood & Magic still gets a thumbs up. If you're looking for a real-time

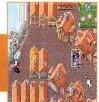
supplies it via in-game statistics for all the creatures, artifacts, structures, and tion, research, and fighting. If you're feeling suitably



TRATEGY

fantasy game that takes 15 minutes to learn.

you'll enjoy this. The multiplayer option via modem, network or direct link provides a boost to the longevity. But if you want more of a fantasy environment flavor-if you want to actually build that empire, master difficult spells, form alliances, and visit arcane sites-check out some of the other games mentioned before.





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www.interplay.com DOS/Win 95 CD 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.1 or Win 95, 2X CD-ROM drive

 Send one or two of your first basal onlerns stomping down the roads so you can see what's coming at you while you build your forces. ▼ Try to get a map that positions a foundation relatively close to your Bloodforge. This will make it much easier to send basal golems for quick transformation. V Do early research in a form appropriate to your foundation. Meanwhile, send a basal golem to the foundation site. You want one good cre ture to position on an incoming route, blocking traffic and hindering your opponent's explorations.

Watch your foundations at all times. If they're destroyed, there may be no way to transform your basal golems into much tougher, more effective allies







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Solid Ice

By Daniel Morris

ny sports fan has a huge place in his heart for an underdog. Odds are that if we're not being paid to play our game, we've probably spent some time as the lowman ourselves. That's why it's so sweet to see a gritty club like the Florida Panthers lay claim to a Stanley Cup berth in a shower of plastic rats, or the upstart '92-'93 San

Jose Sharks down the monolithic Red Wings and come within a crossbar of the Western Conference final against the Maple Leafs.

The minute that unsightly, ungainly, seemingly hopeless team takes the ice against franchises it has no business even competing with,

I'm pulling for the upset. That doesn't mean the upset comes. All too often, the good old college try ends with you flat on your face in a spray of snow shavings.

Strategy First's Solid Ice is an underdog if ever there was one. With competition like NHL '97 and NHI Powerplay '96, putting

together a product that can compare is a daunting chore for a small outfit. Solid Ice has a lot of heart and a lot of nice touches separating it from the big boys, but it's half the hockey game.

If it's editability you crave, Solid Ice has it in spades. Sure, there's no NHL license, but you can edit your own team names, locations,



Get your nose dirty in scrums along the

uniforms, and even logos. Players are fully editable in several statistical categories.

The view of the action is from the side, a la a television presentation. I hear a lot of people dog this perspective, but I'm not so quick to iump on that bandwagon-I think I'd actually prefer to play PC hockey from the TV side view, if someone would just get around to doing it right. Solid Ice doesn't quite.

that's because there's no Check button, just a button to put men in a "checking posture" and then hope for the best. The best you can usually hope for is to hold in the checking posture and skate near a breaking opponent, praying your guy does some-

consciensciously check opponents. Maybe

Does that sound like a strategy for success in a realistic

hockey game? No. And the things that Solid Ice does

thing useful.

Score one for the big boys

get right-excellent one-timing tactics, linemates who rarely take you offside, power plays you can actually set up, and penalty kills you'll actually stress over-are wasted by the mindnumbing graphics.

As large a place as I have in my heart for a scrappy underdog, there's no way I can recommend Solid Ice, I wish I could. But it takes more than bravery to make it in this increasingly competitive league. Solid Ice will just have to watch from the press box.

GAMEPLAY: C

GETTING STARTED: C-



Outto the way, zebra!

any aspect of its graphical presentation.

Even in the hi-res mode, everything looks bad: Player animations are weak. The rink is shoddy. The goalie moves like it's his first time on skates.

The word I'd received upon getting the game was that it didn't look like much, but made up for that failing with good AI and gameplay. The word was right about it not looking like much. As for good AI and gameplay, I can say this-it looks like



hockey. But the play is defensively unsound to aggravating extremes, allowing breakaway breakaway. found it nearly im-

possible to



2X CD-ROM drive

▼ Don't commit your defensemen to TIPS the offensive rush. If the puck is turner back the other way, your goalie will be left out to dry. Speaking of which, resist the urge to clear the puck when your goalie controls it. He tends to cougl it right back up to the bad guys, leaving him out of position to make the save. V On D, let the goalle wo about the opponent's shot. You worry about the rebound.



FIFA Soccer '97

By Rob Smith

noccer is a great game. Many sims have failed to do it justice, but FIFA has never failed. And the 97 version is no different

This year, motion-captured players get the rounded depth of polygons for significantly enhanced realism over the '96 version. This puts the series back on track with VR Soccer in the graphics department

Get in the game while retaining FIFA's superior gameplay. Eleven leagues

composed of nearly

200 teams, complete with accurate 16-player squads, are joined by 64 national teams to provide an amazingly comprehensive festival of soccer, As many as 20 players at once can enjoy this event, although that requires eight local-area-networked machines and a control method that allows you to daisy-chain controllers. A four- or six-button gamepad really helps for pulling off some of the more complex maneuvers, such as the rainbow dribble (the infamous heel-flicking of the ball over your head).

Like FIFA '96, the game's Virtual Stadium technology enabled EA Sports to accurately judge the size and perspective of the players and pitch. As an offshoot of this level of detail, the game uses a control method in which kicking the ball is fine-tuned by the length of time the button is depressed. It's crucial to work out the distance between players and their relative positions.

One major addition is the indoor soccer option. Five-a-side action in the enclosed arena is fast and frenetic, and offers all the options and teams avail-

Play Indoors for a fast-piced flashes of pure brilliance as they pull off for the top corner. A slight pause between the players' running-Motion-cupturing telegs new levels of realism to player movements.

able for playing outdoors.

Enhancing the "watching on TV" feel is the addition to the commentary staff of Des Lynam. frontman of Britain's major network TV soccer show and something of a legend there. John Motson's dulcet tones at the microphone are joined by striker-turned-commentator Andy Gray. Between them, the hanter adds more comment on the state of the game, who's leading, and other familiar chatter on top of the straight "x passes to y" routine.

FIFA '97 is packed to the rafters with options; most will be familiar to those who played through the '96 version. The option to transfer players between squads and save these databases for later use is a simple addition that fact-obsessed types will spend hours organizing.

While FIFA '97 is the pinnacle of soccer simdom and will definitely keep me playing all the

way till '98, it isn't perfect. The goalkeepers suck, with absolutely no command of the six-vard box, let alone the rest of their area. They punch when they should catch the ball and use their feet all too often-okay for indoor play, but not a standard outdoor tactic. These goofs are interspersed with

Seven camera angles chiew off the blobby detailed polygonal players. stunning saves to deny shots that are bound

and-passing and shooting animations also hinders fast-paced breaks, making a quick-fire shot in a goal mouth scramble simply impossible. Also, despite the instant-replay feature to view events from any of seven camera angles, you still can't save goals, fouls, or anything else you want for replay at a later date. Note for '98: Make it happen, EA.

For now, the three levels of difficulty, all the variation of the world's teams and their transferrable players, and the overall realism enhanced by top-quality commentary keep FIFA the best soccer game on the market.





These testimonials are from some people who have played Soultrap...



"It's amazingly addictive. Once you start playing you won't be able to stop."



"...I'd expect this kind of game from an arcade or console system, but this is the first time I've really seen at done well for the PC. Two big thumbs up!"



"The fact that I could change camera angles as I played was really cool. There's even a smart camera that picks the best view for you!"



"The soundtrack is incredible, so i love the fact that I can change the music as I play."

...But don't believe everything you read. Experience it for yourself.



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Ottos inquires depti 49, 1991; Effor vanis in U.S.A and Cainidia anti, Mad Where based in otherwise costina Allow 44 weeks for university. Other valid critic street Man Microbarum



Seek out and destiley the attente threat to mankind in this interac CO-BOM adventure name



PLAGUE
Step unside the mazes of the human mind to battle a death, wine



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Hunter Hunted

didescrolling games are as dead as Dillinger, night? Hunter Hunted may change your mind about that. Sierra has incorporated the staple elements of first-person shooters—with multiplayer deathmatching chief among them—into an innova-



There can be only one

tive little side-view game that's a nice change for action fans suffering from first-person, 2.5D vertigo.

In Hunter Hunted, you play as either a Sly Stallone wannabe or a gargantum minotaur. As the perfect physical specimen of your species, it's your job to rip your way through a decrepit labyrinth infested with monstrous enemies. Picking up all kinds of destructive implements along the way—from whips to guns to bazookas—you have to prove your worth by

being the last man (or thing) left standing.

This game doesn't just scroll to the side, you also move in and out, following tunnels and passageways on a Z-axis through the monitor to apear in a new wing of the labyrinth. The designers didn't waste this feature, either, using it to pull nifty architectural tricks that turn the maze into a brain-bustine Roblisk's Cube.

While a heavy emphasis is put on the multiplayer experience, there's more ambition than excitement to Hunter Hunted. Two can play at a



's your best chance in years to be a minotal

single machine in a split-screen mode, but you can't help but feel like something's missing—namely, the element of surprise, functional surprise, since stambling upon your opponent is the only way to find him). The fact that you're both lighting each other from an omnisent third-person view sups a lot of the energy and anticipation out of a deathmatch. It's still him to chase the bastard with a bazooka when all has is a knift chough.

Hunter Hunted may be worth a look for console converts eager to see the first major-league crack at a console-style game getting the PC deathmatch treatment. But it's nothing to keep the LANs humming after hours. —Daniel Morris

Eradicator

radicator offers jaded 3D shooter vets a new twist on this increasingly tired genre. To wit, you're going to have to use your noggin. While Accolade's entry into the action wars isn't groundbreaking in any way, the fact that it offers some new challeness makes it worthy of notice.

The game can be played from first-person or chase view as one of three warriors: the Duke clone Dan Blaze, the sultry Eleena, or the lizard-like Kamchak. At your disposal are some awesome



Napalm + mines + brainpower = game

weapons, including a napalm launcher, spider bombs, and mines which you can use to nix a demonoid bad guy's takeover of an enormous cityscale installation.

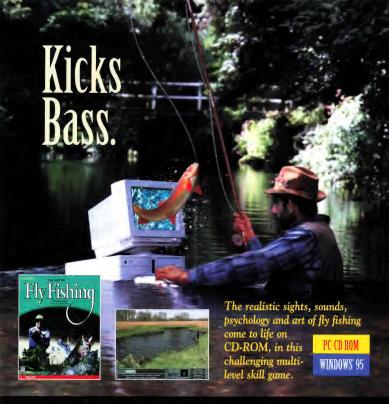
More distinctive than the frepower is the brainpower required to navigate Endicators' levels. There are devious puzzles blocking your way, such as a force field that requires you to find its generator, knock it out, and then examble back to the disabled field before the generator can repair itself. There are several such obstacles on each level, and they demand ingenuity, steith, and resourcefulness. It's a refreshing break from the kill-crazy rampages we're used to be now.

The weapons make Eradicator a particularly intriguing multiplayer contest. Over modern or LAN, up to eight players can go at it with a nice array of tactics. Leave mines in a dark hallway, bathe a likely ambush spot with napalm, or send a phalanx of spider bombs marching around a corner in search of live targets. Conveyor belts and elevators are just some of the features of the included level editor.

Eradicator isn't a complete success, and lacks some of the inspiration that can make this type of game (okay, Duke Nukem 3D) a classic. But there's still a lot of stuff here you haven't seen before.



STREET PRICE: \$49.95



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YOU DON'T KNOW JACK volume 2

the questions

are rife with

sexual innu-

endo, with cat-

Contenders try their hand at the most bizarre trivia ever.

like all monstrously successful games, last year's smash YOU DON'T KNOW JACK was bound to spawn a sequel or two. On the heels of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Sports comes YDKJ volume 2. Berkeley Systems' newest round of hilarity.

For those who've missed out, YDKJ lets three players sit around the keyboard while a clever and sarcastic host quizzes them on pop culture. More often than not.

This new JACK is a kick in the pants

made it The Game for parties.

egories like
Literature That Makes You Wet Yourself, The
National Pastime, and Gettin' Some. The original
took the approach that less is more: there was no
video of the host, no overwhelming graphics. It
was all low-key, but very well done. The music, the
wittiness of the questions, and especially the host

Volume 2 continues the tradition, adding a few minor enhancements such as picture questions and celebrity appearances from the likes of Tim Allen and Erik Estrada. One major change is that the classic host has been replaced by

a Corey Feldman sound-alike—a big mistake. The original host had presence and the ability to sound like he was coming up with clever joke after clever joke off the top of his head. This guy sounds too much like he's reading the material, killing a lot of the genuinely funny lines he's been given.

By tweaking where they shouldn't have, Berkeley's lots one of the original games' feel, making volume 2 an inferior game. On the other hand, it's still a lot better than any trivia game out there, and if you've chantasted YDIS, questions, you'll definitely want to pick it up. If you haven't tried either game, it should be your mission in life to pick up the original JACK. Don't wait.

-Shane Mooney



2	6	AMEPLAY: B			
	GETTING	STARTED: A			
1	0	RAPHICS: B			
타	SOUND CHECK: B- OVERALL				
T KNOW JACK VOLUME	MULTIPLAYER: B				
	YDKJ was great, and here's more.				
	PUBLISHER:	Berkeley Systems 800-344-5541			
F.N	PLATFORM: Requires:	www.berksys.com Win/Win 95/Mac CD Requires: 486/33, 6MR RAM			

2X CD-ROM drive

Win 3.1 or Win 95, Super VGA,

Win 3.1 2X CD-I ESTIMATED STREET PRICE: \$29.99

Trophy Bass 2

any people who have never fished for bass assume those who do are all beer-swilling, overweight rednecks from tiny towns where dating your sister is not only tolerated, but actively encouraged.

Not true. Professional bass fishing is a big-time sport, with big-time money and even fame to be won. Don't believe me? Just check out the intro to Trophy Bass 2, where professional fishermen lift up their catches for hundreds of fans to go nuts

Bite, baby, bite!

over. Heck, the fact that Sierra is launching

a sequel a year after the original says something. Obviously, fishermen such as myself are overjoyed to see such a title, particularly one that's this polished. However, die-hard strategy gamers

this polished. However, die-hard strategy gamers may also be pleasantly surprised by what they find here. The original Trophy Bass accurately simulated the behavior of bass during the passing seasons, as well as the overall feel of the fishing experience. Lots of strategy is involved in finding the hot spots on these massive lakes during difficult weather conditions, and then there's choosing the right lure...

Yet, a true sense of competition was missing, Not anymore. Yes, Trophy Bass has gone multiplayer, with Internet play (for up to 100 players—check it out on the ImagiNation Network's CybePark on AOL: www.inngames.com/t, twoplayer modem capability, and network support for up to 15 players. Now zoom around 10 of America's hortest bass havens and try to outfish your friends. It's not Duke, but it does add some drama to your time on the lake.

Other than the multiplayer options and new lakes, there aren't many changes from the original Trophy Bass. Snags have been added, but they're not realistic, and you still retain the lure on your line when a fish breaks off. Some resource management features, like needing to earn money to buy better boats and fishing equipment, would have been deent additions. Maybe in the third game.

-Steve Klett



GAMEPLAY: B

GRAPHICS: B

GETTING STARTED: A



Fishing on a PC don't get much better than this, bubba.

Descores: Dynamix
Presses: Sierra On-Line

800-757-7707
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LIST PRICE: \$59.99

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DAGGERFALL STRATEGY UNGOVERED & TACTICS

With its amazing number of quests, dungeons, and character configurations,

Daggerfall is a fantasy role-player's dream. But all that complexity can make it a nightmare, too. We're here to help you over the hardest hurdles, with hints that will make you the toast of Tamriel, rather than a toasted body dropped off at the front gate.

Choosing a Profession

Your first big decision is choosing one of the game's 18 professions. Comhat and magic skills are essential, so pick a career that gives some emphasis to both. Nightblades (a mixture of mage and thiel) and Bartlemages (a mixture of mage and warrior) are the easiest roles to play—not that either is a piece of cake.

If you'd rather "roll your own," give yourself at least one primary or major skill that's magical (preferably Thaumaturgy) and another that's attacks you get, how well you hit, and how adeptly you avoid being hit. Sacrifice a few Personality and Endurance points at the start, and stick them

in your hero's Agility. Raising your Agility level should be a priority early on, whatever your profession. Later you can work on Intelligence, Strength, Speed, and Willpower.

Advancement

If you think you've got

ventory screen. That will trigger your advancement.

But first, save your game.

each level, and who

Your character randomly acquires 4 to 6 attribute points



increase faster in levels.

Running. If you run through town all the time, this skill should constantly advance, helping you

How do you gain experience in magic skills if you don't need to use them? Simple: Cast passive spells like Heal, Stamina, Chameleon, and Levitate right before you rest, whether you need them or not

enough experience to move up a level, click on your in-

Advancement in any of Daggerfall's many guilds takes time. Each guild level requires a minimum Reputation of +10/level. You gain 5 Reputation points every time you succeed on a guild quest,



weapons-based. Characters skilled in Thaumaturgy can purchase the Levinate spell for far less cash and use fewer spell points casting it. Levinate lets you move over (or down into) pits, go through holes above you, avoid foes, and on occasion, move directly to the object of a quest without working through 50 or 60 mosters.

Roll the dice

Of the eight character attributes, Agility is the most combat-useful. It figures into the number of wants to settle for anything on the low end? Keep loading that saved game and the inventory screen until you hit the big 6.

Your three primary and three major skills start at a higher level and advance more quickly than your other skills, so be sure to put at least one weapons skill in there. Add a less vital skill that you'll use often, like



STRATEGY & TACTICS

but lose a point with all factions in the kingdom with each passing month (if you're not keeping busy, no one's hearing about you, so your reputation fades). So three successful quests per guild is typically the minimum necessary to advance.

Your character also needs good skill ratings in two areas



If you hate wasting time, avoid the dungeon quests.

meditating mage from The Dark Brotherhood for three hours.

When defending a mage, hang out near the front door. Around the end of the first hour, three attackers will enter.

Keep your weapon out, and be swift. Success is crowned by an enchanted object or a valuable gem.



Stock up on goodies in the dungeons.

that any particular guild teaches. Remember, if you can't get enough training in a particular skill, you can always go to a dungeon, stock up on goodies, sell them in town, and pay to train at the guild. It takes time and money, but you've got both—until you set off on the central quests.

trance, kill monsters wielding weapons and armor, and then drop off the gear at the entrance.

The Mage, Fighter, and Temple guilds are your best sources of quests. You'll have to work yourself up through each guild's ranks, but it pays off: you can make enchanted weapons in the

Fighter Guild, create your own spells or summon powerful demons in the Mage Guild, and pur-

chase or make potions in some of the temples. Quests vary. Turning one down costs you nothing; accepting and not fulfilling it has a small cost. In general, avoid dungeon quests, since these are time-consuming and sometimes nearly impossible to solve. Stick with simple quests to locate somebody in a distant town, rid

a residence of monsters, or best of all, protect a



Battle Hints

Avoid tackling the Undead until you've got dwarven weaponry or better: many of these creatures are resistant to weapons made from steel, silver, or iron. Wounds from the Undead also have a number of unpleasant side effects, including disease, lycanthropy, and vampirism.

Most creatures of a certain kind have identical opening attacks. Rangers will shoot at you from a distance, so close with them at once. Battlemages will cast Invisibility, so strike quickly and furiously at the last place you saw them.

If there are multiple enemies in one room, stand by the door so they can only attack you one-on-one.
When things get hairy, retreat, find a quiet spot, close the door, and sleep until healed.

You won't lose items if you don't instantly grab them off a corpse. Come back later if you're bogged down.

Eventually, you'll want to buy a wagon to hold all your collected gear. These carts have to be parked at dungeon entrances, but you can always return there periodically to pile up all the loot.

Quests

Daggerfall's main quests send you into some of the roughest dungeons this side of Chicago. But nobody's telling you to start off with the baddest monsters around. Work up a bunch of levels first, taking on small quests from the guids. Build up your reputation and develop some very good stats, armor, weaponry, and spells.

Be wary, but don't avoid dungeons: they're an excellent source of revenue when you're not under a deadline. Just hang close to the en-





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Screamer 2

From the Options (main) menu, type these codes:

MRTRK: Makes all tracks available.

TACAR: Bonus car.

TRCAR: Bonus car. TCCAR: Bonus car

TDCAR: Bonus car.

We're weary-eyed, carpal-tunnel gameboys, and we love ya. So here's Resolution #106 for 1997: to keep you current with all the coolest, latest codes. This month, a mix of action, strategy, and driving sims. Storm the strongholds of man or woman with these deadly Gender Wars cheats. Roadhogs, tap those fingers to check out bonus cars and all of the tracks in the blistering Screamer 2. Stuck in Time Commando or Shattered Steel? Not anymore. You'll be crushing metal and leaping through the ages in, um, no time. What can we say? Enjoy!

Time Commando

Use these passwords at the Password screen:

	Normal	Hard
Roman Empire:	QJSLVABL	SOIOLGNK
Japanese Middle Age:	KAYAGEAF	TFJSVJMC
European Middle Age:	MZFSPQDD	XFYAMXIE
Conquistadors:	AVMJFGGU	ZOVASAIV
Wild West:	EVBSVTCV	BODSGWLV
Modern Wars:	YLHHGXBO	VEJHMQKO
Future:	ALPYPJFO	ZEYPCEHO
Beyond Time:	YBULVABN	HMFDLGNN



Shattered Steel

During gameplay, hit Enter, then

type one of the following: GONZLES: Makes bot fast.

RAGNAROK: Blows player bot's head off.

SMITE: Destroys your target. CAPONE: Spawns five gnats to

help you. HENCHMAN: Spawns a shiva to

help you. FNORD: 120 Howitzer.

CLEESE: Screws up bot animation.



NUMBER CHANGER: Rolling mine.

CGO: Large rocket eight-

pack. GFY: Small rocket 18-pack

BCUA: Large rocket 18-pack.

DINGLEBERRY: Heavy laser. BUMSAUCE: Heavy rapid laser.

NAPALMINTHEMORNING: Gives vou a mine.

KICKSOMEBUTT: Heavy plasma, two 64-packs of small rockets

TINKERBELL: Nova weapon. HARDCODE: 30mm gat.



PYROTEK: Gives you a

LOCKANDLOAD: Gives all weapons max ammo.

IMOLITTAHERE: Wins

RODRIGO: Spawns two light choppers to help.

MONKEYSLUNCH: Alters textures. CHERNOBYL: Nuke.

mission

TELEPORT <1-512><1-512> Takes you to any position

on map.

Gender Wars

To use the cheats:

(1) Start a normal game.

(2) Go to the Options screen.

(3) Select Save Game.

(4) Then, in any slot, type:

BLIV A PLAYSTATION: God mode-invulnerability.

infinite energy, weapons

WORLD OF FISH:

Lets you access any level (1-14) (5) Hit Enter.

(6) From the Options screen,

select Ouit To Titles. (7) Start a new game.

(8) Pick men or women.

(9) Follow the onscreen directions

EE MORE ONLINE http://www.pcgames.com YOU DON'T NEED GUTS'
TO PLAY THIS GAME,
YOU JUST GOTTA KNOW
WHERE TO PUT 'EM.



Lives are hanging in the balance, so rush to your local software dealer. Code Blue. Or visit www.pc.ibm.com/multimedia.

By David Gerding

Visions of Pentiums Dance in Their Heads...

t's the holiday season-the time of year when we think of others (how can we persuade them to buy us gifts we really want?), of goodwill toward men (how good will those presents be?) and of replacing our PCs with the latest and greatest...which we think about all year, anyway, so there's no sense in stopping just for the holidays, right?

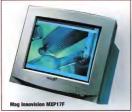
To get into the high-tech holiday spirit, we've rounded up all the top gear to build a pair of nearly perfect PCs. Yes, it's hard work playing with the latest and greatest hardware for hours on end. We blasted each other in Duke deathmatches. We seared our eveballs gazing at incredible 3D-accelerated graphics. We shattered our nerves experiencing

muscle-CPU performancé on games that the rest of you won't see until 1997. But. hey, it's the holidays, and we're willing



to make those big sacrifices to bring this very special gift to you. Now, is that Christmas spirit, or what?

Our first system is for the money-is-no-object crowd. We call it the PC of the Gods, a setup that's truly greater than the sum of its amazing parts. This is what all loval PC Games readers (and editors) truly deserve. For those for whom money most certainly is an object, we offer the PC of the Gods Who Are Nearing Their VISA Limit, a system that is sure to thrill all but the most affluent of game aficionados





The PC of the Gods

The Core System

- Intel Pentium 200 with MMX (PSSC)
- 64MB EDO RAM
- 4 PCI expansion slots
- Universal Serial Bus (USB) support

We chose a Micronics motherboard model M55Hi as the base for the system. Micronics has a great reputation, and this board delivers the latest in highperformance specs, including more PCI slots, which will come in handy in '97 when more cards-especially sound cards-make the jump to PCI. The USB support on the machine takes a little imagination (and faith): While there aren't many USB peripherals right now, we believe there will be in a couple of

months, and with the Micronics, you'll be ready for them. The ability to chain your peripherals will he worth it.

The processor, a 200MHz MMX-enabled Pentium, means you'll be ready for all the MMX 'wares, game and otherwise, that appear in the happy new year. MMX is really going to accelerate all things multimedia on the PC once the programmers have retooled their code for the new technology. Games will suddenly get bigger color palettes at higher resolutions. (Ever tire of the brown-gray color scheme in Ouake?) Sure, the systems won't be out until late January, and MMX-



enabled titles may take even longer. But we think the wait is worth it.

Finally, a huge, heaping 64MB helping of fast EDO RAM prepares you for a world where Windows 95 memory-hog gaming is the norm. If you can find a system with the newer Synchronous DRAM, get it instead. Synchronous DRAM is even faster than EDO, although paving more than about a 10-percent premium over EDO memory probably isn't worth it. But this is the PC of the Gods! Just say "Charge it."

The Drives

- Western Digital 3.1GB
- Adaptec SCSI Controller 2940UW
- Iomega Jaz Iomega Zip
- Pioneer 12X CD-ROM

The hard drive is your basic Western Digital EIDE



drive, but huge! The whopping 3.2GB model is our favorite. It's a BIG drive. Western Digital's products are fast, reliable, and deliver serious bang for the buck.

When you can't get bigger, go for faster. On the CD-ROM front, we're speeding up to Pioneer's 12X CD-ROM drive. This thing spins so fast it has an anti-vibration mechanism to keep it from literally hopping across the desktop! And DVD-ROM's slow path to the market means the Pioneer will be worthwhile for some time to come.

For some extra "portable storage," Santa's popping for Iomega's SCSI-based Zip and Iaz drives, which store 100MB and 1GB, respectively, on cartridges you can put in your pocket. To make sure these units perform at peak efficiency, we pick Adaptec's 2940UW SCSI adapter, which offers topof-the-line Wide SCSI performance.

The Display System

- Matrox Millennium
- MGA MediaXL-MPEG
- MGA Media TV
- Orchid Righteous 3D or Diamond Monster 3D Mag Innovision 17" XP17F Monitor

We think our display system reflects real genius. We start with the Matrox Millennium, still one of the best all-around Windows and DOS 2D accelerators. Then we add the MediaXL MPEG card which endows the Matrox with hardware MPEG playback and video capture. We also slap on the MGA Media TV card, a TV tuner that'll let you watch TV on the desktop. (We're tired of craning our necks around to watch those May Headroom reruns on the 19-incher across the room.)

For 3D, we recommend either the Righteous 3D or the Diamond Monster 3D. Which one to get? Since performance is similar on each board, base your selection on the software bundle you prefer. Both boards use the Voodoo 3D graphics chip, which delivers 3D graphics even better than those of Rendition-based boards. Plus, you get to keep your existing 2D card.

For the monitor, we step up to a Mag Innovision MXP17E a knockout 17-incher with a host of neat features. (Even we didn't have the heart to hit Santa for a 21-inch monitor.) This unit made the cut for its quality, its support of hi-res (1600-by-1200) for playing super-hi-res games like Links LS, and its great price. An LCD walks you through customizing settings so you can get the highest refresh rate at various resolutions, which is easier on the eyes.

Also, this isn't one of those multimedia-ready monitors with built-in speakers. The system of the gods must have separate speakers, so why get "built-ins" that you're going to turn off?

Sound and Modem

- Creative Phone Blaster PnP 33.6
- Yamaha DB50XG MIDI Adaptor
 - Altec Lansing ACS55 with Dolby Multimedia Surround

Our unusual choice for a sound card isn't a sound card at all, but a multifunction "telephony" card from Creative Labs. The Creative Phone Blaster PnP 33.6 incorporates onboard Sound Blaster 16 hardware. But the Phone Blaster also includes full duplex speakerphone functionality, voice mail with caller ID, and the highest conventional modem speed available today-33.6Kbps. While Sound Blaster's AWE32 is still technically the audio king of the hill, too few games take advantage of its proprietary positional audio features. We'd rather be able to do nifty Computer Phone Tricks.

What about MIDI and wavetable? We've got you covered. We recommend the Yamaha DB50XG daughtercard; it plugs into your Phone Blaster without taking up an extra slot in your system. This card outdoes the MIDI you'll get from a Sound Blaster AWE32, sporting 4MB of ROM samples, twice that of the AWF32. Yamaha has been pushing its MIDI XG "standard" as the replacement for General MIDL They're right-ir's much, much better.

Finally, Altec Lansing's Dolby Surroundenabled speakers use cleverly placed drivers to dunk you in audio as immersive as a three-speaker setup can get. The next step up from here is home theater, a big step even for gods.

The Controllers

- Microsoft Intellipoint Mouse
- Thrustmaster F22
- Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad
- Thrustmaster T2 Steering Control Face it: when it comes to playing games, the stick's the thing. And the mouse...and the steering wheel. Every game genre has its own ideal input device. Our conclusion? Get 'em all.

For the mouse, we specify the Microsoft Intellipoint. It may not be flashy, but it's functional and very comfortable. A great stocking stuffer. Our pick for joystick is the new Thrustmaster

F22, the crown jewel of 'sticks. This controller has a feel unlike any other. It screams quality, it's totally programmable, and it has enough buttons and flexibility to keep the most hardcore PC games fanatic satisfied. (We're taking a wait-and-see position on CH Products' new force-feedback stick. We need to save something for '97.)

For platform games and shooters, nothing beats a gamepad. Microsoft has the winner with its new SideWinder Gamepad. Great feel, programmability under Windows 95, and the ability to daisy-chain up to four of the pads for multiplayer action make it our top choice.

For hard-driving excitement, we want the Thrustmaster T2 steering control. This is the highend unit that includes separate shift and accelerator/brake controls. It's simply more compelling to steer a car in a driving game with a steering wheel, Go figure! Monster Truck Madness and IndyCar II come alive!

THE GODLY SYSTEM

Intel Pentium 200 with MMX (P55C),	About \$2,900
Micronics Motherheard (64MB EDO	100
RAM, 4 PCI, USB, and all the hells	18
and whistles)	<u> </u>
Adaptec SCSI Controller 2940UW	\$290
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Matrox Millennium	\$199
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Yamaha D850XG	\$170
Altec Lansing AC\$55 with	\$198
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THE GRAND TOTAL (AND WE MEAN GRAND)

AMBER Journeys Beyond







Death Is Not The End

An adventure game of supernatural beauty & haunting elegance for Win '95^{1m}.

Journay into the unknown. Unroved crystories hidden within compelling stories of hourst randing tragetly, mind numbing obsession, and child this innocense.



SIMULATIONS



The PC of the Gods Who Are Nearing...

(you know the rest)

The Core System

- Intel Pentium 166
- 32MB EDO RAM

While we'd rather not recommend anything less than an MMX-enabled Pentium, we live in the same world of annoving credit limits as the rest of you. The 166 with this much RAM is a good place to start. Besides, when it comes to MMX, Intel has

hinted there will be MMX Overdrive chips available down the road, so if MMX becomes an absolute must, you can make the upgrade then.



Sound

▼ Creative Labs Sound Blaster 32 PnP The Sound Blaster 32 PnP is an excellent gift for the audio-inclined. It's not Creative's top-of-theline AWE32, but many of the features on the AWE32 go unused by today's games anyway, so why pay more? Wavetable synthesis-a requirement for any serious gamer-is standard.

Modem

U.S. Robotics Sportster 33.6

Pioneer 10X

The point here isn't features; it's getting you connected to the Net and other gamers head-to-

> head at the highest possible speeds, U.S. Robotics remains a price-performance leader among modemmakers, Although many phone lines can't

provide 33.6Kbps rates

About 5288

\$600

reliably, we feel it's important to be covered on the high end. Once you're connected, you can never get enough bandwidth. Best of all, the Sportster 33.6 will be upgradeable to conform to U.S. Robotics' recently announced X2 technology. which promises to allow Sportster modems to run at a wailing 56Kbps next year.

The Drives

- Western Digital 2.5GB
- Pioneer 10X CD-ROM

Western Digital's 2.5GB drive is a bit smaller than

the 3.1GB drive in the PC of the Gods, and it's easier on the pockethook. It offers the same great performance and reliability, including toll-free tech support for those who need help with the installation The Pioneer

Combat

10X has been around a little longer than the 12X and is a good value if you can still find one on store shelves. (There should be other 10X drives in this price range.) Just how cool is the 10X? We can say with confidence that it's more than twice as cool as 4X drives.

The Display System

- Any Rendition-based graphics cards (including Creative, Sierra, Intergraph, etc.)
- Princeton Ultra 17+

These Rendition boards are more than merely excellent. They offer awesome 3D performance, topnotch VGA performance for DOS games, and solid Windows performance-all on cards you can buy for around \$200. Also-and this is important for



PC Games readers-the Rendition is the only chip so far that supports Ouake natively. Indeed, Quake fans may forego our "Perfect PC" recommendation of a 3Dfx-

based board in favor of these Rendition boards just for the opportunity to toast hi-res Shamblers, For the monitor, we chose the Princeton Ultra 17+, a solid 17-inch display that's Plug and Play-compatible at a very affordable price. If you're an avid gamer, we can't recommend gaming at less than 17 inches anymore.

The Controllers

▼ CH F-16 Combat Stick

This solid stick is sure to meet the needs of most flight-sim fans while serving duty as a standard joystick. The great thing about it is that it's wellbuilt and fully programmable, for less money than comparable Thrustmaster gear.

THE DEMI-GODLY	SYSTEM
CORE SYSTEM	PRICE
Intel Pentium 166	\$1,880
with 32MB EDO RAM	April 1
DISPLAY SYSTEM	2000

Bendition-based card

Princeton Ultra 17+

(Creative, Intergraph, Sierra, etc.)

CONTROLLERS CH Products F-16 Combat Stick DRIVES Western Digital 2.5GB \$288 Pioneer 10X CD-ROM \$188 SOUND & TELEPHONY Sound Blaster 32 PnP \$170 MODEM U.S. Robotics Sportster 33.6 \$160 THE STILL-VERY-GRAND TOTAL





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All..... Latency

TECHNOBABBLE

First, get this straight: The Internet simply wasn't designed to let you play against 15 other people in a Quake dearnmath. It was designed to keep bits (information bits, that is) moving from point A to point B and back in spite of network inconsistencies—inconsistencies like, say, a 50-megation nuclear warhead inconveniently removing the Molwest. Before the Internet was the Internet, it was the Apparet, created by and for the military to withstand nuclear wart.

Every packet of information moving across the Internet carries with it information about which machine it came from and to which machine it's headed. That way, when the big bombs started going off, and whole parts of the network went permanently offline, the information being sent by the Dukematches are too slow. Why is that? Why is there no reaction when I hit buttons? I've got a top modem but I keep getting toasted. What's happening across the phone lines and through the servers?

Understanding Latency

The first thing to understand is that you can't 15% clarks of populetdy. Electrons carrying bits move through wires at the speed of light, which is fixed at 186,000 miles per second. Things only move fixers on Star 176. This means that in a perfect point-to-point communication system, with Earth about 25,000 miles round, the very best latency one could achieve with a competition on the opponence of the country of the count

available at 2400 baud, they would actually achieve better latency figures because less time would be spent in the moden! In a game like Duke, the packets of information are a mere 20 bytes, and clever game designers might go this route in the near term.

The remaining time in the latency pool is 80ms of the bits traveling the network there and back, plus another 10ms on both the sending and receiving machines—not bad figures by any standard.



unfortunate survivors would bounce around until it arrived at the intended destination.

Unfortunately, the very flexibility that makes the Internet terrific in the event of nucleat holocaust means that your precious game data mean-ders is way from point A to point B. The biggest problem facing online games is lateroy—the time it takes information created on one computer to be sent to another computer, and a response sent back to the first computer, Beauste there's no "fixed path" for data to travel on the Internet, there's no way to predict from one moment to the next just how had latency will be. While latency is usually measured in milliseconds (thousandths of a second), this lag sometimes exceeds a second, which slows things down so much that games are un-playable or quit a thought.

site side of the planet would be about 13 milliseconds (ms), or about 7.5 "conversations" per second. The thing to remember is that because of the speed of light, nobody can give you "latency-free" gaming. Sadly, the reality of latency is far worse than this ideal.

Latency is the sum of many parts. For example, consider TEN's average of 225ms latency.

According to TEN's detailed year. According to TEN's detailed technology offsee, Dave King, most of the latency happens not in the network, but in the modern. Remember, it takes time for the modern to take the bits your computer sends it and translate those bits into audio signals that are sent over the phone network. In fact, that translation process accounts for more than half of the latency in TEN's 225ms average. If games could work with the paltry amount of bandwidth

What You Can Do

If you want the shortest latencies, play head to head via a "null modem" against a friend on a computer sitting next to yours, or via a modem connection with someone who lives next door. Better yet, play on a network in your office with people in your office. Why? Remember, modems increases latency and distance increases latency.

TEN, for example, plans to have a regional business model eventually to try to achieve latencies of around 150 to 160 versus the current 200+ figure. It's all a matter of lessening distance.

If your goal is to play with multiple people and you are using a modem, your lowestlatency solution is going to be a regional dial-in server architecture like that implemented by DWANGO. DWANGO avoids the Internet



altogether—negating the vagaries of the Net described above—and

places game servers in major cities into which you can dial and compete against people also logged onto that server. This setup has both distance and network architecture working in its favor.

The bits travel less distance because all the players are geographically proximate, and the network pipes are dedicated to one thing—getting your bits to the other players as fast as possible.

If you want the scope of games and players currently available only on the major national networks like TEN, Mplayer, and Engage, you've got two choices. Most of these networks



Why Do I Miss So Often?

Payer on machine 1 fires a rocket. That signal is sent down to the server and then out to the other machines in the game. They rebound the signal to allow the program to complete its instruction and keep the action moving.

Let's say machine 2 has a good connection and rebounds machine 15 shot information almost instantly. Machine 2 would be in position to respond, move, fire, whatever, maintaining the flow that's so vital to the fun.



Damn! Another latency death!

have preferred Internet service providers (ISP) that have promised to give game players' data special treatment, so that some of the Internet latency problems are avoided. Some of these networks also make directdial numbers available, which avoids the Internet, but you'll pay a modest premium to use them.

When choosing an ISP with an eye for multiplayer gamers, your best bet is a major national provider. The national providers are usually fewer "hops" away from the major backbones of the Net, which means your bits move more directly. Ask your service provider how many "hops" they are away from the following major luternet pipes: MAE East, MAE West, NY NAI, SF NAP, or Chicago NAP, If they're more than two hops away, you'll probably want to look dewshere.

Remember, in a multiplayer game, the "world" is usually only as fast as the weakest link. Fast processors and a fast, high-quality modem will not only improve your experience, but everyone else's as well. Some networks group players based on latency, so if your hardware is fast, you'll be paired up with others who have fast hardware—yet another incentive to uperade.

The Future

What does the future hold? In the short term, modem-makers paying attention to the games market might create a new generation of faster "latencyreducing" modens, though such technology will probably be eclipsed by newer all-digital technologies that avoid the translation-latency introduced by modems.

Even new technologies such as U.S. Robotics' recently announced X2 range of modems, sporting speeds up to 566, are not going to significantly reduce the effects of latency, as the bandwidth available for data remains the same. Incorporating Digital Signal Processors (DSP) into modems, which convert the signals far faster, would be a definite starting place.

Other options available roday, such as BDN cards, add less than half the amount of milliseconds to the latency rotal than do existing modems. Down the road, cable modems will reportedly introduce a mere 6ms of latency into the equation. Bette, but not perfect. As more than one multiplayer-game designer has been heard grumbling, "The speed of lights sucks."

But problems occur when madrize 3 has more of a dodgy connection. 3 has more of a dodgy connection. Soy it receives the message from machine 1 and takes five times longer than machine 2 to respond. Everyone then has to wait for machine 3 to re-bound its signal back through the server and out to everyone. This delaw is the "lac."

or so the tag. Cusake has a significantly advanced server based model. Rather than have all the information about a game running on all the machines taking part, as in Duke, Qualse sets one machine saide as the server. The game is run from that machine with other machines getting the information they require without all the details being sent to every player in the game. It's a kind of 'need-to-know' system: the server tells each machine just what it needs to know, without the unnecessary octra information that would slow down response times.



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power in Quake

November issue, page 1741 was the first of a flutry of 30 gapphics cards to sport Rendition's Vérité V1000 chip set. It's quickly been joined on the shelves by Intergraph's Reactor 30 ord Sierra's Scramin' 30. Because each eard is essentially the same in hardware compatibility, purchasing decisions are based heavily on the bundled software. Here's the deal on the ordion software. Here's the deal on the ordion.

Screamin' 3D

OVERALL: A

Despite having a background in the hardware market from the Azzech sound card days, Sierra's entry into this fray was still a surprise. But with a healthy line-up of its own games to support its hardware, the company's decision makes sense.

Installation was a breeze—Windows 95 plugand-play actually worked—and the drivers were upgraded without fuss. A strong bonus for Sierra is The next generation of graphics cards

TECHNOBABBLE

3D Options

the use of Canopus Software's optimized drivers. With virtually identical hardware, these drivers help to enhance the card's performance in 2D—an area found wanting in most 3D accelerators. (Sierra; 800-757-7707; www.sierra.com; \$199)

Bundled software:

IndyCar II (full version)
Silent Thunder (full version)
CyberGladiators (full version)
Quake 1.06 (shareware with
Rendition patch)

Reactor 3D

OVERALL: A-

Intergraph's Reactor boasted the same simple installation and setup as the Screamin' 3D. Without the enhancement of the Canopus drivers, the Reactor showed no significant boost to performance in DOS. With the prevalence of Windows 95 games, this shouldn't be a major problem.

New drivers are being made available for free download from Intergraph's Web site when available. Backed by excellent company support and customer service, Intergraph has a strong position in this crowded market. (Intergraph; 800-763-0242; www.ingc.com/ics/reactor; \$149 until Dec. 31, \$199 list price)

Bundled software: IndyCar II (full version) Quake 1.06 (shareware with Rendition patch) Hellbender (trial version) Monster Truck Madness (trial version)

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Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy. Just check PC Games' running list of our top hardware recommendations Each month. we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

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CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	8+
Sound card	AWE32	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; \$249.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; \$219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; \$69.95	A+
Gamepad	SideWinder gamepad	Microsoft; 206-882-8080; \$39	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; \$219 internal, \$299 external	٨
Graphics card	Screamin' 3D	Sierra; 800-757-7707; \$199	A

NEC MultiSync M700 monitor

NEC; 800-632-4636; \$899

HNOBABBLE 🗪

Start-up woes, boot disks and memory, and how to speed up an upgrade.

By Patrick Marshall

A Cold Day in Hell

My computer keeps locking up! Every time I start it, it freezes, so I can't get into Windows. It only works after about two hours, and then does the same thing when I turn it off and back on.

David Keener Cypress, CA

If I could troubleshoot this kind of problem with the information you've given me, I'd auit this iob and make my fortune on the Psychic Friends Network. That said, I'll hazard a guess. When a system locks up before even getting started, the problem is usually one involving memorv used by one of the devices attached to the computer. It's usually the graphics adaptor, but it might also be the hard drive or some other device.

It's rare that such problems are sporadic, but I've seen it, and the cultrit is generally an interrupt. or IRQ. So how to fix the problem? The more certain way is to write down all the settings of all your devices-what memory addresses, IROs, and DMA settings they're using-and then make certain that none of them are in conflict. Also, if your system is using expanded memory, use the emmexclude command in your config.sys file to exclude the memory range used by your video card from being used for expanded memory. (The syntax for this command can be found in your DOS manual, and the memory range you'll want to exclude is A000-EFFE)

Alternatively, if you're in a trial-and-error mood, you can turn to a utility such as Norton Utilities, Microsoft's MSD or, within Windows 95. the Device Manager to find open memory addresses and interrupts. Then change the settings of your devices one by one to match open settings.

Finally, your best shot is to find a techie friend to take a hands-on look at your configuration,

Boot Disks? Why?

Why do so many of my games require boot disks to run even though I meet or surpass the minimum requirements? They say I need to free up more conventional memory. Could you explain what is so important about the 640K of conventional memory when I have an additional 8MB of RAM?

A. Rossi Montreal, Canada



First, a little background. When Intel designed the first generation of PC microprocessors-the 8088 and 8086 chips-they were built to address 1MB (1024K) of RAM, which seemed like a lot of memory at the time. Of that 1MB, DOS reserved 384K of high memory for system usage, which left 640K of conventional memory for your applications, including RAMresident drivers and programs.

As programs grew larger, however, that 640K limitation soon became too confining, and specifications were developed for addressing additional extended or expanded memory. Applications and drivers written to take advantage of that extended memory could at least partially evade the 640K limit, though they still required at least a portion of the 640K of conventional memory,

Unfortunately, many DOS-based games still require a relatively large amount of free conventional memory-as much as 512K or more. That's hard to come by if you've loaded network drivers, CD-ROM drivers, mouse drivers, and a bunch of other things that require at least some conventional memory. (If you want to take a look at what your system is currently loading into memory, go to the DOS prompt and type MEM /C /P.)

In any event, the boot disks are there so that you can boot your computer with only those drivers and configuration settings required to run the game.

Too Slow for Doom

I have a little problem with my computer: it's too flippin' slow! My dad says we upgraded it from a 486/66 to a Pentium 75, but I doubt it considering that even Doom II runs slowly. Is there any way I can check what I have in my system? Can memory cause it to run slowly? I have 12MB of RAM.

Chris Lewin Saratoga, CA

> If you don't trust your dad, who can you trust? Well, for starters, don't believe the MSD utility that comes with Microsoft Windows, It can tell you a lot about your system, including the amount of RAM and the status of ports, but it has an irritating tendency to report Pentium chips as 486 processors. Fortunately, there are a num-

ber of utilities on the market that are more reliable in reporting processor types and speeds. The best-known is Symantec's Norton Utilities. The program lists for \$179, and includes a collection of diagnostic tools as well as data recovery and other utilities. You can reach Symantec at 800-441-7234

Also, if you have the Windows 95 Systems utility (accessed through the Control Panel), it will tell you what kind of processor you're running, though not its speed.

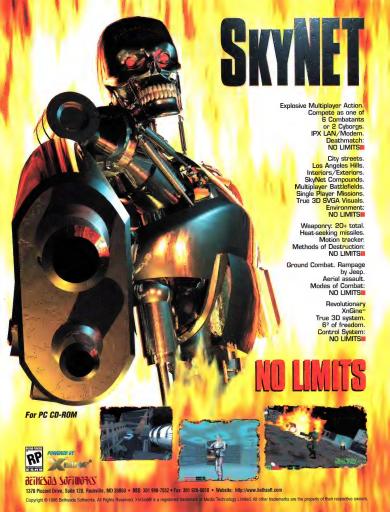
But don't look just to the processor. Moving from a 486/66 to a Pentium 75 is not by itself going to improve performance much for many operations. You'll get more improvement by taking your RAM up to 16MB and getting a good graphics accelerator with fast video RAM.

The slope is, as the saying goes, slippery. As you upgrade one part of your system, another part becomes the bottleneck holding back faster performance. You can end up spending more than if you had simply bought a new computer.

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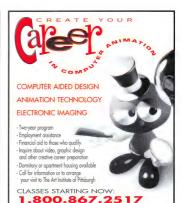


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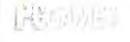


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Rob Smith

Daniel Morris

Real-Time vs. **Turn-Based** Strategy

wo of PC Games' fiercest strategy buffs go toe-to-toe to resolve the burning question in strategy gaming today: Is turnbased warfare going the way of the dinosaurs? Should it be consigned to the scrap heap of history, like some mothballed PT boat? Or is there still some ammo left in the classic turn-based computer wargame?

Reviews editor Rob Smith is a champion of the real-time revolution, as shown in his November feature on upcoming real-time strategy games. For him, it's only a war if you can hear the bullets whistling.

Assistant editor Daniel Morris is a frequent victim of multiplayer humiliation over the office LAN, but he can win Gettysburg for the South or capture Moscow for the Nazis if he's got a few turns with which to do it.

The firing commences, with Rob's rantings in bold type and Dan's in the classy italics...

Smith here. A natural born killer if ever there was one.

Okay, tough guy. What's the big deal about real-time strategy?

Putting yourself in the position of officers, NCOs, and infantry on the ground, feeling the anticipation of a battle, witnessing firsthand the successes or failures of your decisions-that's what realtime strategy is about. It's something that turn-based play simply can't re-create.

The main adrenaline rush in real-time gaming is in scrambling all over hell with your mouse trying to plug all the leaking holes in your troops' AI. When you've got the luxury of a turn to direct your forces, you can accurately re-create the individual, personal dynamics of combat without having to worry about the fact that your eyes and mouse can only be in one place at one time.

But that's the excitement of battle! While I'm not saying that turnbased games are necessarily dull, you always play an isolated role in the events. You're just some gin-swilling general sending troops over the top without any thought or vision of the slaughter ahead. A frustration anxiety attack because you can't possibly direct the actions of all your troops is NOT the same as "the excitement of hattle." In real-time strategy games, victory goes to the faster guy. There's just no other way to put it. You can make all kinds of boneheaded decisions and still prevail just because you're nimble with the mouse. It's called nerve, speed, and the ability to think and react on the fly.



Civil War General



True, speed is important, moving the mouse across the battlefield to get units mobilized. But behind the speed is the requirement for the same tactical awareness. A bad decision will still be a bad decision if things don't work out. whether you take 10 seconds or 30 minutes to decide. Real-time is also more encompassing in scope of responsibility. In turn-based games spread over wide-scale areas, you play as the general-and just the general. Real-time lets you be the general, the majors, the sergeants, and the grunts, all at the same time. The requirements on the part of the player are very differentspeed and quick-wittedness are vital. but there's no loss of strategic planning. That's just not true. Games like Jagged Alliance or X-COM gave us brilliant simulations of tactical, squad-level combat, They're much more enjoyable than their real-time counterparts because you still control the actions and reactions of individuals, but you get to give each soldier his

own realistically separate time to operate smartly and soundly. Gamers understand that turn-based action is a piece-by-piece re-creation of a real-time event, broken apart into controllable units. Ironically, turnbased tactical combat is a far more realistic and responsive simulation of real-time military engagements than true real-time games are. I get the last word. Real-time offers far more in terms of action. excitement, and-most importantly-involvement in missions and campaigns than the turn-based model could ever allow it can't be

Whatever, As long as the world knows that you wouldn't dare sit across the other end of a modem connection from me with an SSI game between us.

I said I get the last word.

Fine

Rob Smith's favorite strategy games include Command & Conquer. Warcraft II, and Syndicate Wars. He prides himself on his nerve, speed, and articulate trash talk during network games.

Daniel Morris' favorite strategy games include Civilization II. Allied General, and X-COM; UFO Defense. He went easy on Rob because Rob is technically his boss, and could issue a real-time command to have him sent back to the mailroom he came from.



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